

# THE SAINT OF MANTRALAYA

ENGLISH RENDERING BY K. LAKSHMAN

M.A., C.A.I.E

PART TWO



Original in Tamil by

# SRI RAGHAVENDRA

THE SHRI OF MAHIMAI

[A TRANSLATION OF 'SRI RAGHAVENDRA MAHIMAI']

## PART TWO

RENDERED INTO ENGLISH

By

**K. LAKSHMAN**, M.A., C.A.I.I.B.

ORIGINAL IN TAMIL

By

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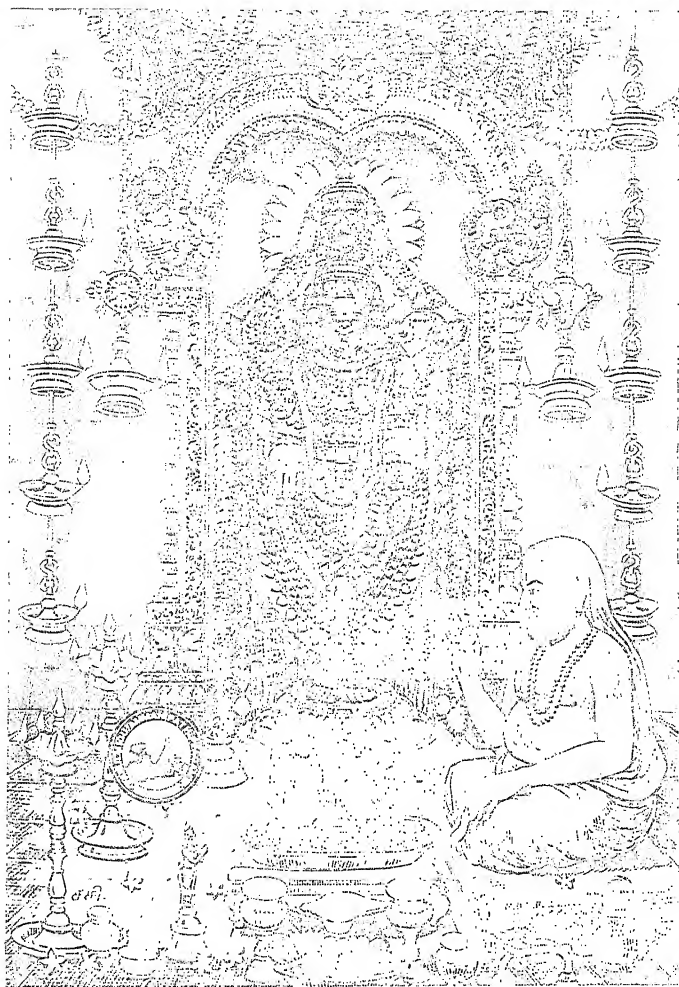
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**- ARULMIGU AMMAN PATHIPPAGAM**

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# The Lord and the Guru who fulfil all desires



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everything good



**Sri Sri Sujayeendra Thirtha, the 21st pontiff  
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by Sri Sri Raghavendraswami**

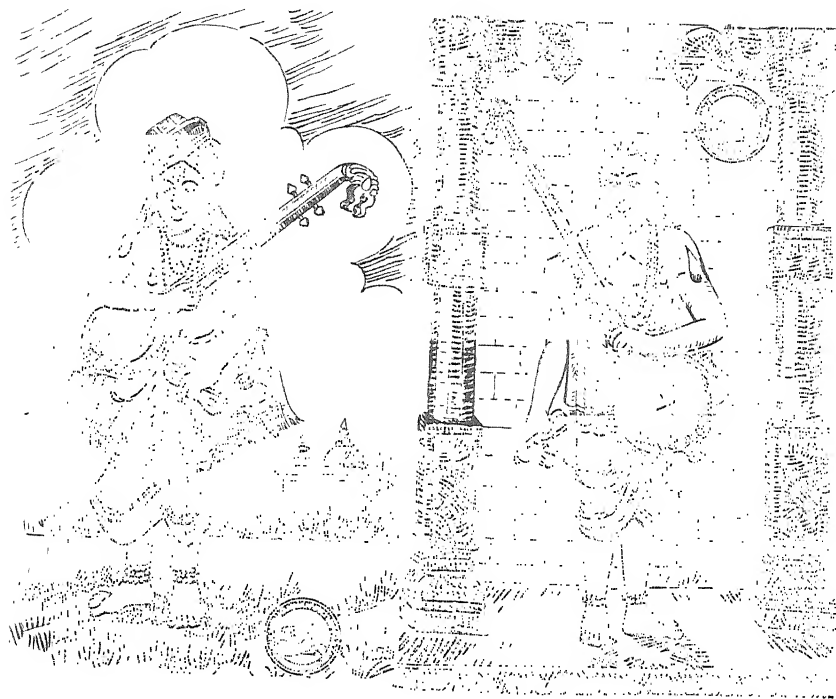
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**Vayu Jeevothama!**



**The three avatars of Sri Vayu Deva  
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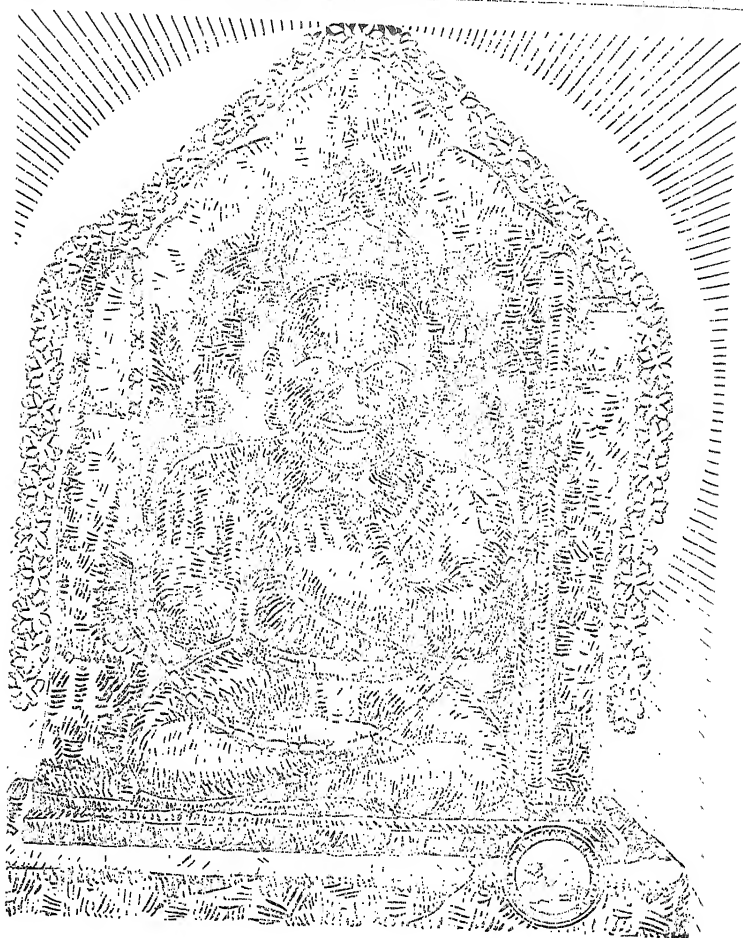
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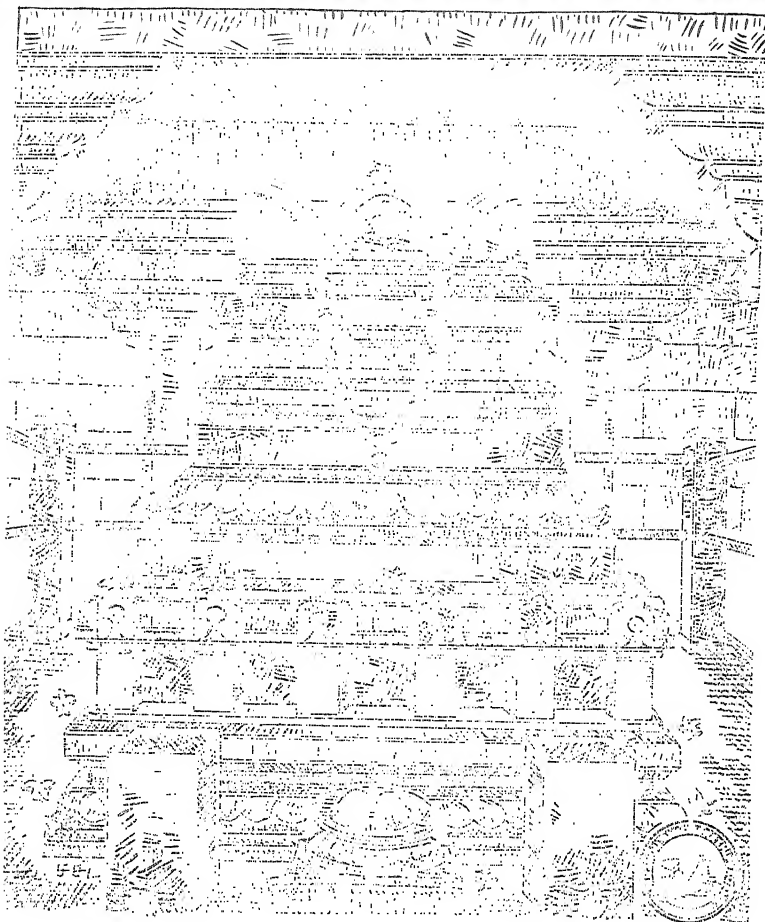
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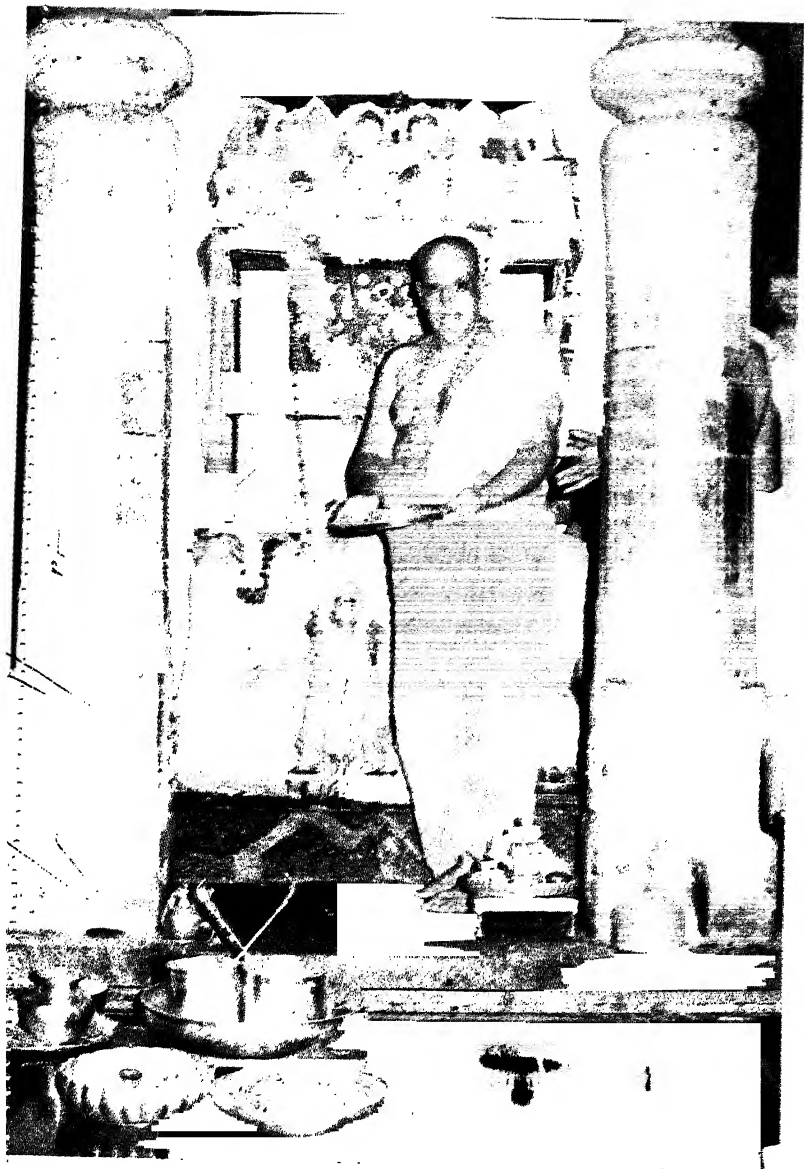


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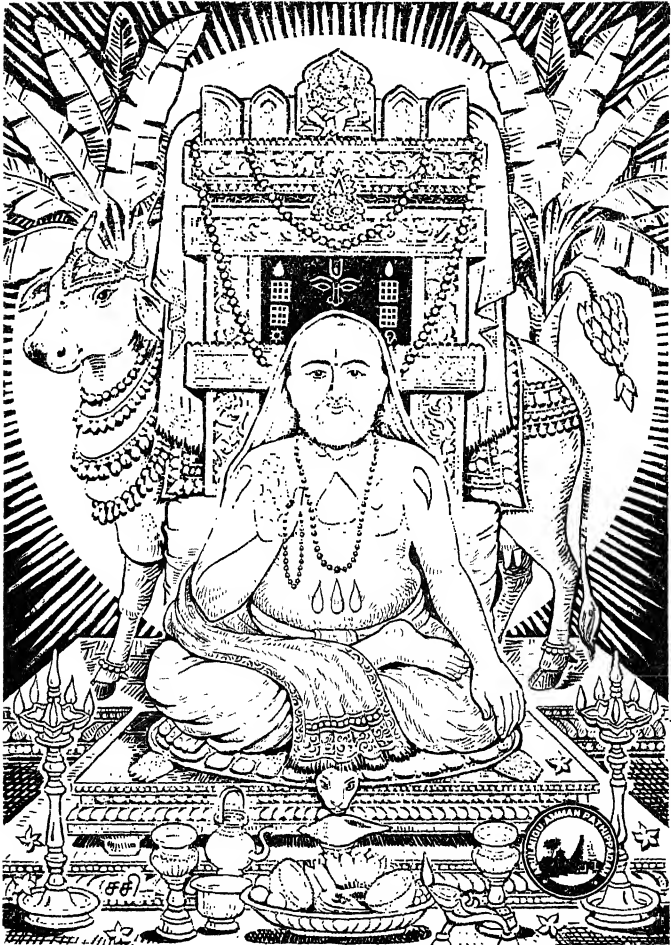


**Sri Sri Vijayeendra Thirtha's  
Brindavana at Kumbakonam**





# THE SAINT OF MANTRALAYA



**Sri Sri Raghavendraswami at whose  
Lotus Feet this humble work is placed by  
K. Lakshman, the translator**



**The Pontiff of Sripadaraja Mutt His Holiness  
Sri 108, Sri Vijnananidhi Thirtha  
Sri Padangalavaru, The Head of the  
Sri Sripadaraja Mutt, Mulbagal, Kolar Dist.  
(Karnataka) whose "Anugraha Vachana" for  
Part I of this work has been a Trend-setter  
for the publication of this volume.**

**FOREWORD AND BLESSINGS OF  
SRI C.R.KRISHNASWAMI RAO B.E. (CIVIL)**



**“SRI GURURAJO VIJAYATHE!”**

I have, since long, been well-acquainted with the author, Sri Amman Sathiyathan, and as such am aware how much his religious writings have been casting their magical spell on thousands of people over the years, benefiting them immensely in their lives.

His writings on Sri Raghavendraswami evoke spontaneous veneration and sublime devotion towards Sri Gururaja, in even the average person, let alone the zealously religious ones. More importantly, those reading “Sri Raghavendra Mahimai” are being graced with the blessings of Sri Raghavendraswami – a truth known to all and acknowledged by those who have experienced it

Ever since the commencement of writing this work – Sri Raghavendra Mahimai (Part II) – the author has kept me informed of all the events and happenings right

through the long course of its taking the final shape and emerging in print. The notings gathered for this book, whether from me or from other sources (through sustained efforts), have all been discussed with me comprehensively, before their being put in writing. And when finally they were compiled in book form, every chapter of it was read out to me in front of the Brindavana of Sri Rayaru.

While the various incidents covered in this work are truly awe-inspiring and wondrous, the fluency of the author and his felicitous presentation of facts in a crystal clear manner – in a style that could be described as simple and unassuming, but equally assertive wherever appropriate – add feathers to the cap of the writer.

At the close of each chapter, the reader's curiosity is aroused to know what follows next and the way his interest is kindled and sustained throughout (without his being aware of it), is something unique – a real blessing that Sri Gururaja could be deemed to have conferred on the author. Those who read this book once, do feel inspired to read it over and over, times without number – an attribute that is significantly outstanding in respect of this marvellous creation. The fruition of years of research work that this book represents and the forceful presentation that it contains, will undoubtedly serve the holy purpose of its being of great value and benefit to humanity, thereby invoking also the blessings of Sri Gururaja on everyone .

It is my desire that the author should continue his research work on Sri Gururaja and bring out more

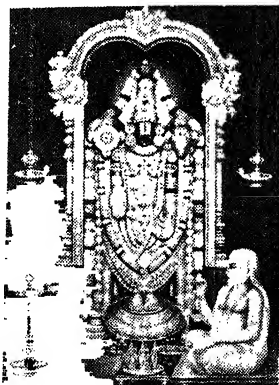
volumes of 'Sri Raghavendra Mahimai', for which he is blessed with all the talents necessary for its execution.

I pray that Sri Gururaja should bless Sri Amman Sathiyathan with long life, good health, prosperity and progeny, as also every happiness in life.

Chennai 5  
10.2.1995

**C.R.KRISHNASWAMI RAO**  
(Manager, Sri Raghavendraswami  
Mutt, Tiruvallikenni)

(The above is a translation of the foreword appearing in "Sri Raghavendra Mahimai, Part II" - Tamil).



## **TRANSLATOR'S NOTE**

Encouraged by the stunning response to Part I of "Sri Raghavendra, the Saint of Mantralaya", I have made an attempt here to present a translation in English of the Tamil version titled, "Sri Raghavendra Mahimai - Part II," authored by Sri Amman Sathiyathan.

The book presents a bird's eye view of the Life of Sri Raghavendraswami, covering his mundane appearances from an altogether new perspective - his persistent linkage with certain eminent avatara purushas, who had co-existed with him in the earlier births, being unravelled by the author in an awe-inspiring manner.

The miracles ascribable to his supernatural powers, that have been taking place all over the world and under varied circumstances - sometimes even to grace the non-believers - have been assiduoulsy compiled by Sri Amman Sathiyathan and rendered with authenticity.

How the Saint solves the problems of devotees by enlightening them in their dreams and at times even rushes in disguise to the succour of those in distress, are set out by the writer in a manner that would kindle and sustain the interest of the readers.

The procedures for Sankalpa Seva have been detailed in one of the end chapters and so too the

personal experiences of Sri. Amman Sathiyathan and his family members, who on their return journey from Mantralaya to Chennai, are most unexpectedly escorted to Tirupati from Renigunta and from there guided to Tirumala by a stranger (who disappears from sight all of a sudden) – bearing testimony to the belief that Sri Raghavendra, if prayed to with unwavering faith and devotion, will grace his devotees with benign results, like a Kamadhenu and a Kalpavruksha, appearing in any form and responding to their call, at the appropriate time.

This translated version is being introduced to the public with the fervent hope that it would help propagating the greatness of Sri Raghavendraswami.

I should acknowledge with thanks that Tirumala Tirupati Devasthanams, Tirupati, have extended their financial assistance for the publication of this work, under their scheme, “Aid to authors to publish Religious books”, which funds have helped me to meet part of the printing cost of this venture. I am grateful to TTD for their kind gesture, which I deem a special blessing showered on me by the Lord of the Seven Hills.

The matter for this publication has been typed out with great care and thoroughness, by my friend Sri M.D. Padmanabhan, who has undertaken the work as a humble service to Guru Raghavendra. It would interest readers to know that by the grace of Sri Raghavendra swami, Mr. Padmanabhan’s son and daughter got married within a short span of time and left for America, even as the proud father was engaged in the task of typing out

the last few chapters of this book - yet another instance of the benign grace that the Saint unfailingly extends on true devotees. Infact, it was when the typing work for Part I had been commenced by him that Mr. Padmanabhan had the earliest of the blessings of the Guru, in that his son had just then received the appointment order for his very first job in India that he took up then, with great interest and dedication.

I would be failing in my duty, if before concluding, I do not express my sincere thanks to all those who have contributed their valuable efforts in the publication of this humble work of mine. Guru Raghavendra, I am sure, will bless them all, as also those who read this book with true devotion and the steadfast belief that Sri Raghavendraswami is ever ready to answer genuine prayers and grace those seeking his help with unswerving devotion and faith.

Om, Sri Raghavendraya Namaha!

Dated: 5.4.2000

**K. LAKSHMAN**

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2/10, 13th Street,  
Nanganallur,  
CHENNAI-600 061. India  
Phone No.2345673



# FEEDBACK FROM READERS

## Most Fascinating

**C.S.NATESAN**, B.A., LLB, DBM, DFM,  
ACS,D.COM., (IMC), Dip. in Com., (Govt.) LFI

B/12 PADMA  
Plot No.293  
5th Road, Chembur,  
Mumbai 40007  
Dt.10th Feb. 1997

Dear Shri. Lakshman,

I chanced to see a copy of the book **“SRI RAGHAVENDRA THE SAINT OF MANTRALAYA”** the English translation rendered by you, with my friend.

The book is nicely published and the most fascinating feature, to me, was the page where Sri Raghavendraswami's signature is shown.

I presume that you are an ardent devotee and follower of Sri Raghavendra Swami as otherwise the fruition of such rendering of English version of Tamil Book would not be possible.

I am sure, you would have had Darshan of Sri Raghavendraswamy in person during the period when you were on the job of translation.

I am inclined to ask you a personal question.

What particular incident or circumstance prompted you to take up this divine job of writing this book in English?

Is it that Sri Raghavendraswamy himself prompted you or is it through any of your other Gurus?

I am sorry, I am asking a very personal question but would like to have your reply to this question.

I am adding that it is with the Grace of Sri Raghavendraswamy that we were able to find out our Kuladevatha after 125 years. This was prompted to my younger brother by an enlightened person who prescribed a simple method of pooja to Sri Raghavendraswamy i.e. on every Thursday to garland Sri Raghavendraswamy with 7 Roses.

I am thrilled to write this letter to you and I expect a reply from you for my query.

With Regards,

In the service of Sri Raghavendraswamy,

**C.S. NATESAN.**



Padmanabh R. Tejpal  
7, Amrut Keshav Naik Road,  
Fort, Mumbai 400 001.

11-8-1998

To,  
Shri. K.Lakshman.

Respected Sir,

I have read your book "Sri Raghavendra - The Saint of Mantralaya" - Part one. It is a wonderful book.

I am interested in knowing more about Sri Raghavendra and of the experiences people have been getting.

Kindly let me know if there are other books on Sri Raghavendra and if you have translated any of them in English. I can read English and Hindi.

Please let me know at your earliest, for which I will be highly obliged.

Thanking You,

Yours truly,  
**Padmanabh**

■ **Discourse**

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Dt.20.05.'99

Dear Sri. Lakshman,

My humble Namaskarams. I happened to buy your book **"SRI RAGHAVENDRA, THE SAINT OF MANTRALAYA"**. My hearty congratulations to you for writing such a wonderful book. I enjoyed reading the book as it gives an honest & impressive biography of the Saint. The style is simple and the manner of writing is direct and effective.

At Kochi, there is a Brindavan of the Saint within the temple complex of Sri Anjaneyar. Udupi brahmmins own & manage the Temple. I use my spare time to give discourses in English & Malayalam on certain selected subjects like Lord Guruvayoorappan, Saint Tyagaraja. These are musical discourses.

In August the Pratishta Utsav of Saint Raghavendra will be celebrated. The manager of the Temple has asked

me to give a discourse on the Saint. Since I had no references on the Saint, I bought your book and my discourses will be based on your book, for which I express my gratefulness.

May God be with you always.

Om Namo Narayanaya.

Yours Truly  
**N. NARAYANASWAMI.**

**Gives Mental Strength**

Dt. 14.09.'99

Dear Sir,

Your translation work on "Sri Raghavendra, The Saint of Mantralaya" (I Volume) written by Mr. Amman Sathyanathan is quite helpful to us. It gives lot of strength and mental balance to us. We are looking forward to your translation work on the second volume.

Thank you very much and regards.

Yours faithfully  
**Mrs. M. Seshagiri Rao.**

**Note:** Your translation work in I volume is excellent and quite easy to follow. I have given my address below:

Mrs. M. Seshagiri Rao  
No.90, II Main, 16th Cross,  
AECS Lay out, I stage, Gaddalahally,  
Bangalore - 560 094.

## An eye-opener in life

Srinivas. P.Rao  
 401, "Jal Tarang",  
 Lok Puram, off 2nd Pokhran Road,  
 Thane - 400 601, Maharashtra  
 Tele: 5343876.

Dt. 31.12.'99

Dear Mr. Lakshman,

I am a resident of Bombay and have read the book "The Saint of Mantralayam" translated to English by you which has been an eye-opener in my life. After reading the book and praying to Sri Raghavendra Swami, HE has enriched me in all aspects of life.

Similar to Shri Amman Sathyanathan and yourself, I am a rigid believer & devotee of Sri Raghavendra Swami and wish to speak or write to you on Guru Sri Raghavendra Swami.

Therefore, please send me the address, phone number of Shri Amman Sathyanathan and yourself, so that I could speak on my next visit to Chennai.

Thanking You,  
 Yours truly,  
**Srinivas Rao**



# SRI RAGHAVENDRA

## THE SAINT OF MANTRALAYA

### (PART II)



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## PRAYER TO SRI RAGHAVENDRA

'Ever dazzling like the gold that sparkles in its true colour when molten, holding a sacred garland and a holy vessel in either hand, clad in saffron attire and strings of Tulsi beads adorning his neck, Guru Raghavendra, adored by Sri Yogindra Thirtha, exemplifies a perfection of Divine Knowledge, devotion and renunciation.

Prayer to him with utmost devotion from the depth of one's heart will bestow the fulfilment of one's desires.'

— Sri Appannacharya

(Sri Yogindra Thirtha, next in pontificate to Sri Raghavendra, had the grace of being the first one to perform puja to the Brindavana of Sri Raghavendraswami and his devotional service to the Guru is connoted in the prayer).

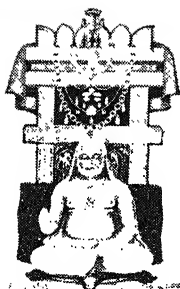
Let us pray to Sri Raghavendra with steadfast devotion to get the best in our lives, as edified above by Sri Appannacharya, the beloved disciple of Guru Raghavendra.

"Om Sri Raghavendraya Namaha."

# SRI RAGHAVENDRA

The Saint of Mantralaya

## PART TWO



### THE DIVINE MESSENGER WHO CREATES MIRACLES

The Lord propounds in Gita, 'I have no birth; I have no transformation; I am indestructible; I am the master of everything; still I control and rule over nature, through My divine potency. To this end, I manifest Myself, whenever necessary.' (**Bhagavad Gita 4:6**).

He enlightens further, 'Turn your mind towards Me. Have devotion towards Me. Revere Me and worship Me. If you do these, you will reach Me. This is true. I assure you this, My beloved one.' (**Bhagavad Gita 18:65**)

Sri Narayana has no birth or end. He is the cause for the creation and destruction of all living beings in the

universe. He creates Himself whenever there is decadence in morality and proliferation of evil, all around. To protect the good and vanquish the wicked, Sri Narayana takes avatar in every yuga. Besides, when required, He also causes the birth of Mahapurushas, who, through His grace, work for the good of the world - for the establishment of dharma, peace and happiness, as also for spreading morality and uprightness and propagating devotion towards Sri Hari, the Almighty.

Sri Raghavendra is one such Divine gift to the mundane world. In Mantralaya, on the banks of the Tungabhadra river, about 300 years ago -in 1671 A.D. - he entered alive into a Brindavana that he himself had envisioned and got completed under his personal supervision. He had fixed the auspicious date and time for the Brindavana pravesha, well in advance, and executed his plan to perfection. Alive even now in the Brindavana, he is always gracing his devotees and fulfilling their desires through his spiritual powers, like a Kalpavruksha and a Kamadhenu.

As is known well, Lord Venkataramana is the deity worshipped most, in Kali yuga. It was through His grace that Venkatanatha was born. Venkatanatha - later famed as Sri Raghavendra (after his taking to sanyasa) - has worked miracles in everyone of his earlier births. And he continues to be doing so to this day, still existing in his Brindavana at Mantralaya!

In the celestial world, Sanku Karna was enjoying the privilege of being a member of Chaturmukha Brahma's coterie and doing service for the daily puja of Sri Maha



Vishnu. Sri Raghavendra, in an earlier birth, had been Sanku Karna - in other words, Sanku Karna has taken re-birth as Sri Raghavendra, in this Kali yuga!

In the Krita yuga, it was Prahlada who was instrumental in the annihilation of the demon king Hiranyakasipu, by Lord Narasimha. And it is the same Prahlada, who has been born as Sri Raghavendra!

In the Dwapara Yuga, Sri Bhalhika Raja had served Lord Krishna and it was Sri Raghavendra who had then been born so, to perform that role.

During Krishna Deva Raya's reign, the renowned and much respected saint, Sri Vyasaraaya, had graced the ruler by sitting on the throne for a day (on.8.1.1521), to protect him from the evil influence of the Kuha Yoga Peeda that would have otherwise caused the king's death. It was due to this significance that the saint later came to be venerably referred to as Sri Vyasaraaja. Sri Raghavendraswami is none else than Sri Vyasaraaja of an earlier period - in other words, Sri Raghavendra is Vyasaraaja re-born!

In Part I of 'Sri Raghavendra, The saint of Mantralaya', we have studied the life story of Sri Raghavendra extensively and in depth, but have had only glimpses of Sri Prahlada and Sri Vyasaraaja, in that coverage.

- We have distinctly seen there how the various mundane appearances of Divine messengers - right from Sanku Karna's descent to the earth, to Sri Raghavendra's birth - have all had common linkages

with each other, the blessed ones born as Divine messengers enjoying the supreme grace of Sri Narayana.

In Part II, we would be seeing more of Sri Raghavendraswami, but as in the earlier one, we would also be intrigued in knowing about his previous births, which are truly marvellous and fascinating.

Although we have known about Sri Prahlada earlier, we would now be examining the various aspects concerning his birth in greater detail. We shall be immersed in the comprehension of how the association between sage Narada and Prahlada - which had its roots in the Krita yuga, when Prahlada, even whilst in the womb of his mother, was lending his ears to Narada's chantings of the Divine name and his recital of the glory of Sri Narayana - has not just been a passing phase, but has manifested again and continued in the Kali yuga also.

In the previous publication, we have had a bird's eye view of Sri Vyasaraja's birth and later surveyed how he had been extending his grace well beyond Sri Krishnadeva Raya's period, right upto 1529 A.D. And here we would be scanning how Sri Purandara Dasa and Sri Kanaka Dasa, the famed disciples of the great saint, who both had for long been with him during his mundane existence, had been privileged to enjoy the supreme grace of their preceptor. It would be pertinent to mention here that it was from Sri Vyasaraja that Sri Purandara Dasa had obtained his holy initiation.

Sri Vyasaraaja, who had accepted the lowly born Kanakadasa as a disciple (to disclose the greatness of that plebeian to the world) will be seen here in a new angle. How the Lord, Sri Udipi Krishna, turned his direction around to grace Kanakadasa with his darshan, will also be seen with awe and veneration.

Hitherto unexplored details about Sri Prahlada and Sri Vyasaraaja, will be laid bare in this. Great as these are, Sri Vijayeendra Thirtha's life and his spiritual exaltation are no whit less in importance, as it was Sri Vijayeendra, who had, during his life time, seen events linking two mundane appearances of Sri Raghavendra!

Yes, Sri Vijayeendra had seen the earlier avatar of Sri Raghavendra - as Sri Vyasaraaja - having been his disciple then. Also, he had seen his re-birth as Sri Raghavendra. How this came about is wondrous and the awe-inspiring details are set out with all the thrill and suspense that go with them.

When Sri Raghavendraswami had entered the Brindavana alive, he had proclaimed that he would be living there for another 700 years and true to that many events have been taking place that bear testimony to the pronouncement. Some of these have been set out with authenticity in Part I, but in this volume we will be totally absorbed in knowing about many more of them that cover almost the entire writing.

True, he is still alive, but will he be bodily present in the Brindavana, in the same state as before? An incident concerning Sri Dhirendra Thirtha that gives the answer to this, will really enthral us!

Yes! Six Years after the yogic Dhirendra Thirtha's entombment, his Brindavana structure is dismantled, the mortal remains taken out and interred with sanctity in another Brindavana, as ordained by him! This unique happening is going to be seen with amazement!

Despite Sri Sudheendra's attempts to convince him, Sri Raghavendra, when he was Venkatanatha, was loath to take to the saintly order. It was only when Goddess Saraswathi Devi appeared before him and enlightened him about what was ordained for him that he consented to taking to sanyasa. Following the appearance of the Goddess of learning, Sri Rama, Sri Krishna, Sri Narasimha and Sri Vedavyasa too graced Venkatanatha by their presence before him.

That these four deities are to this day radiating their influence and extending their grace from the four corners of the Brindavana of Sri Raghavendra at Mantralaya, will be known through an incident connected with Sri Vijaya Dasaru. It was Sri Vijaya Dasaru who had carried on and accomplished the task left behind by Sri Purandara Dasa. And Sri Vijaya Dasaru was Madhvapati re-born, who himself was none else than Purandara Dasa's son in the earlier birth!

We are also to see a marvellous incident involving Sri Vijaya Dasaru that took place in the holy precincts of the temple of Lord Venkateswara at Tirupati.

Likewise, we will be coming across a courtroom scenario in which a devotee prefers a complaint against Sri Raghavendra, while the role of the dispenser of justice is assumed by Lord Venkataramana Himself!



As is known well, Sri Raghavendra was born in the Madhwa sect. Quite befittingly, the marvellous prowess of Sri Madhwacharya, the founder of the Madhwa cult, will also be explored in this.

In Part I, certain mystic happenings relating to the raising of Sri Raghavendraswami's Brindavana at Mantralaya were narrated, viz., how the place was secured under mysterious circumstances, as also the queer incidents connected with the erection of the Brindavana itself.

In this volume, the supernatural powers manifest at some of the mrithika Brindavanas of Sri Raghavendra-swami are covered extensively. The mysterious potency of Sri Raghavendra, as revealed in the installation of Brindavanas at places like Brindaranaya, Nanjangud, Athni, Sirigolla and Sri Lanka are really spine-chilling. And more about such Brindavanas and their powers are dealt with in Part III.

Sri Raghavendra's miracles explained in this, are varied and distinct from each other. They would make us wonder whether such things could in fact take place in our mundane environment. But all those do carry authoritative proof.

That Sri Raghavendra was above considerations like caste, creed or religion, is revealed to us through various incidents that took place when he was leading his earthly life. Conformably, his holy resting place on which his Brindavana was erected (and where he is still alive) was an offering that he had received from a devout Mohammedan.

Long after his Brindavana pravesh - in the 19th century - has he not, by his appearance before him, graced Thomas Munroe, a British Civil servant, who was then engaged in the exercise relating to the restitution of Inam lands to the government? Oh, we will be really wonder-struck to know how many, of diverse religious faiths, had gifted vast lands to him!

We will also later come across several incidents that bear testimony to his universal concern for all, bereft of the prejudices attributable to considerations like social status and birth.

And how many atheists have turned godly, through the grace of Sri Raghavendra! The Lingayat who installed a Brindavana at Athni was earlier a pagan. Kamalakar Joshi, though born in a Brahmin family, was a staunch non-believer. And Balraj, born in a socially backward class, was going around propagating irreligious concepts and questioning the very existence of God. How these persons get transformed through the mystic powers of Sri Raghavendraswami, is going to be seen emphatically.

It would be no less spine-chilling to know how the guru, through his supernatural powers, had provided food to a starving person and monetary help to another in need of it for celebrating a marriage. Further, he had even graced the non-devout ones, besides removing the sorrows of those in need of mental peace.

An incident involving Sri Bhuvanendra discloses that Sri Raghavendra was strangely intent upon giving darshan to a layman, rather than to the one adorning the

pontificate of his monastic order. The reason for this, on deep analysis, will leave us in perplexity about the hidden significance of it.

Just as he showers his blessings on his devotees, he is also quick to grace those exhorting to others that if Sri Raghavendra is prayed to with utmost faith and devotion, the fulfilment of one's desires will be automatic. These wonderful happenings find place later.

Moving in a forest area in conditions of extreme heat and hunger, a person pours out his wishful thinking to another, expressing how nice it would be if delicious food items were to be available then. The other reacts, 'Certainly, Sri Raghavendra can provide it, if he so chooses' and lo in no time the delicacies are at hand for their disposal! This wonder too finds narration.

We will also come across an incident where he gives food to a devotee on a silver platter, when the latter had felt deep anguish at not having been able to get the Guru's prasad that he had been longing for..

His wondrous deeds in places like Japan and Ethiopia unravel the truth that he is ever in readiness to help his devotees from wherever they may raise their call for his succour.

The surgery that the Guru himself had performed on Sri Mallappa Shinde, as also the treatment given by him to his devotees in their dreams that cured them of their illnesses, provide really marvellous substance for reading.

He stops a running train for a mysterious reason and on another occasion renders service to the Railways under bizarre circumstances!

A devotee prays to him most devoutly, but the Guru graces another one with his darshan. The latent reason for these odd happenings are presented in this book in an incontrovertible manner.

'Revered Gururaja, there is no way for us to overcome our difficulties, except to look to you for help,' is the cry often raised by those in predicaments. How Sri Raghavendra has graced such devotees with instant solution to their problems, effacing their distress, is explained through several happenings, cited in different contexts.

Every word, every sentence and every chapter written here has been penned after profound analysis and scrutiny, rendered possible only by the grace of Sri Gururaja. Readers should therefore indulge in going through them with deep understanding, thoroughness and a sense of devotion. One would then feel enthralled and even experience the supernatural powers of Sri Raghavendra through happenings in one's own life. For this, single-minded and unswerving bhakti is absolutely necessary. To this end, the mental outlook and confidence that steadfast belief in Sri Raghavendra will yield mystic results, should be developed in one's consciousness.

The large number of letters that I get testify that this humble writing of mine is creating such awareness in the minds of the readers.

In accord with this trend, the experiences of some of the devotees have been included in this writing. And I am hopeful that your deep devotion and prayer to Sri Raghavendra from the depth of your heart will definitely prompt you also to write your strange experiences to me, ere long.

It is said the very possession of "Ramayana" and "Mahabharata" in one's home is auspicious. The reason for this is ascribable to the "Sundarakanda" that gives lustre to "Ramayana" and the "Bhagavad Gita" that is considered the soul of the "Mahabharata".

Sanjaya, the trusty counsellor of King Dhritarashtra tells the latter, "It is my belief that Wealth (Lakshmi), Victory and Morality will prevail wherever 'Bhagavad Gita' is revered."

Likewise, this writing on the mysterious powers of Sri Raghavendra, who had been graced by Sri Rama and Sri Krishna, will undoubtedly bring peace, affluence and well-being of the homes where it finds veneration.

Let us now proceed to know the various mystic happenings, understand their significance and through such indulgence get the blessings and grace of Sri Raghavendra, to live a prosperous life, free from cares and wants.

## **SRI PRAHLADA AND SAGE NARADA**

Be it at the Moola Brindavana of Sri Raghavendraswami at Mantralaya or the Mrithika

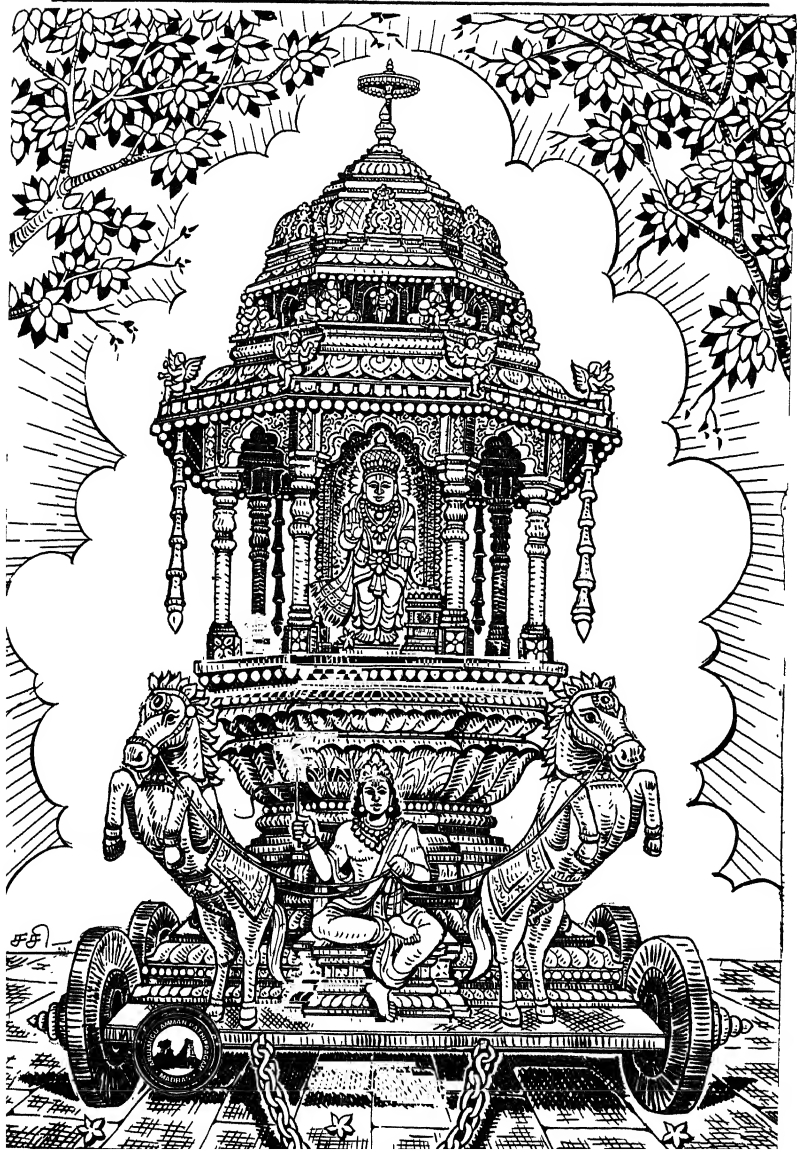
Brindavanas spread all over the country, the rituals connected with the abhisheka and archana are performed only to the Brindavana of the saint. But in the procession in chariot or palanquin, as also on the decorated seat on the elephant and in street processions, it is Sri Prahladaraja who will be gracing the devotees by his presence there and not Sri Raghavendraswami.

Those who have visited Mantralaya could not have missed the grand spectacle of the idol of Sri Prahlada being taken around in procession in a silver chariot every day at about 8.00 P.M. and likewise, at the Mrithika Brindavanas too, it is Prahlada who is adored in the palanquin/cradle worship of the deity. In other words, while Sri Raghavendra is worshipped as the principal deity in the Raghavendraswami Mutts, it is Prahlada who is idolized in the processions.

As already mentioned, Prahlada avatar signifies the earliest appearance of Sanku Karna in this world, long before his birth as Sri Raghavendra.

And in the Prahlada avatar, it was sage Narada who had an important role to play. Although Prahlada, even when he was Sanku Karna, had totally dedicated himself in service to Sri Narayana, it was Maharishi Narada who was responsible for Prahlada lending his ears to the chantings of the Narayana nama and the singing of the glory of the Lord, even whilst in the womb of his mother Leelavathi, before his mundane emergence.

It is guru upadesa or education by the teacher that helps one in intellectual/spiritual attainments, however



astute one may be. In the lives of great souls too, the guru or preceptor, has had an important role to play and to Prahlada, Narada was the powerful mentor.

We have seen extensively in Part I about the birth of Prahlada and the extermination of Hiranyakasipu's. But glimpses of those are to be visualised here also, as what follows in continuation is most fascinating. We are indeed going to see the strange happening of Prahlada and Narada interchanging their places!

Let us, at this juncture, picturise in our mind's eye the scenario when demon Hiranyakasipu's, tyranny was spreading unchecked. He had, through a boon obtained from Sri Brahma, become so powerful that he won over all three worlds and brought them under his control in no time. With a haughtiness born out of the exultation that there was none superior to him, he started acting in an unbridled and irrational manner, that soon he ordained that except his name and glory, there should be no mention of any others, anywhere.

Sriman Narayana, the Almighty, takes birth in every yuga, to protect the good and destroy the evil forces. And to kill the demon Hiranyakasipu too, the Lord makes His appearance on the earth. To accomplish this, He causes Sanku Karna, the Divine messenger (who was doing service for the Maha Vishnu puja of Sri Brahma Deva, in the celestial world) to suffer a curse, as a result of which he is ordained to be born as a demon in the terrestrial world.

Hiranyakasipu's wife, Leelavathi, is in a highly dispirited state of mind during her pregnancy, as she is immensely vexed about the misdeeds of her husband.



Seeing this as the opportune time (to console her), sage Narada presents himself before her.

Leelavathi feels relieved on seeing Narada and prays, 'Oh, respected Sir, your very presence here at this moment has brought me mental peace. I beg of you to tell me of noble things in life, so that I may have mental tranquillity that has been eluding me for so long.'

Sri Narada then starts narrating to her the glory of the Almighty, Sriman Narayana. That if one indulges in chanting the Narayana nama or the Lord's name with devotion, no harm can befall such person and he would be invincible, was the message conveyed to her in no uncertain terms, the child growing within her also experiencing its influence! Whatever be the ordeals, the chanting of the prayer, 'Om Namo Narayanaya,' with intense bhakti, will help one overcome all the obstacles and vanquish the enemy, was the all important counsel passed on to Leelavathi for the benefit of the child that she was carrying then.

Yes, Sanku Karna was developing in Leelavathi's pregnancy, following the curse that he should be born in the tribe of demons. But since he was engaged in doing divine service like fetching flowers and assisting the conduct of the Maha Vishnu puja in the celestial world, he was graced to have the privilege of imbibing moral instructions, even whilst in the womb of his mother.

Narada, later leaves the place, blessing Leelavathi that the child to be born to her will be no ordinary one and that he would turn out to be the cause for morality and righteousness taking deep roots.



In due course, Leelavathi gave birth to an attractive boy.

We have already seen in Part I that it was Prahlada whom Leelavathi had borne for nine months and that the child, early in his life, had faced several ordeals at the hands of his irate father Hiranyakasipu, who, unmindful of the fact that Prahlada was his own son, was bent upon killing the lad for chanting the name of Lord

Narayana, ignoring the commands to utter his name. The utterance of Narayana nama however saved Prahlada from every one of the trials and this enraged Hiranyakasipu and impelled him to think of annihilating that Narayana, with the evil intent that the boy will then be left helpless and could easily be brought around. With this wicked design, Hiranyakasipu challenged Prahlada to show him whether Narayana was present in a pillar in front of him and lo, the Lord indeed made His appearance from the pillar and caused the death of Hiranyakasipu, after a duel with him.

The demon king had obtained an insidious boon from Brahma, but that lord Narasimha had killed him equally cleverly and without vitiating its spirit, has been seen distinctly in Part I.

Presently, we shall be seeing the roles of Sri Prahlada and Narada from a different perspective - an altogether new one - and appreciating their importance.

The Prahlada avatar of the Krita yuga did not cease with that mundane birth. It has continued till the birth of Raghavendra in the Kali yuga and still persists, as Raghavendraswami is alive even now in his madavana.

Likewise, the Narada-Prahlada relationship is not unbroken and has been extending from the time the former was instrumental in passing on the glory of Narayana to Prahlada, in the Krita yuga. But how this has been continuing will be most interesting to know about..

The answer to the riddle how a Guru can become a disciple and the latter the preceptor, will provide an explanation to this strange happening. While we come across instances of the pupil excelling the master, how the sishya himself could become the mentor is truly intriguing.

For this to occur, it is to be mentally picturised that there must have been a Guru and he should have had a disciple. Later, the disciple must have become the master and the one who had been the mentor to that disciple should have become the pupil of the one who had been his student. In other words, there must have been a change in the status of the teacher and the taught. But, is this really possible?

Yes, in the life of Sri Raghavendraswami this wondrous happening has indeed taken place! And involved in the strange occurrence are the two mentioned earlier, viz. Sri Prahlada and Narada, the interesting episode concerning which finds narration in the next chapter.

Before proceeding further, readers should indulge in making a mental note of some of the facts about Sri Raghavendraswami. Although they have been said in Part I, those who have not had the opportunity of reading those, can now get to know them from the brief coverage here.

It was Sanku Karna, the celestial being of Deva Loka, who was born as Prahlada in the mundane world,



in the Krita yuga. In the Dwapara yuga, he again took birth as Bhalhika Raja. (Details about Bhalhika Raja are only scantily available and have therefore not been touched upon. They will be furnished in a later volume, when available with authoritative proof, for collecting which earnest efforts are still continuing).

Later, in the Kali yuga, he was born as Sri Vyasaraja, followed by the birth as Sri Raghavendra.

What is to be borne in mind here is the continuity in birth - as Sri Sanku Karna, Sri Prahlada, Sri Vyasaraja and Sri Raghavendra. We shall now proceed to the next chapter to see the master becoming the pupil and the disciple the Guru.

## **THE MARVEL OF GURU BECOMING THE DISCIPLE AND THE LATTER THE MENTOR**

We have already known about sage Narada motivating Prahlada with the chanting of Narayana nama, even whilst the latter was in the womb of his mother Leelavathi.

The Guru then was Narada and the disciple to benefit from that spiritual influence was Prahlada.

But now Prahlada has to become the master and Narada the pupil, to complete the circle. And this indeed takes place, but how it happens is the big question that would confront anyone.

It needs to be recapitulated here that Sanku Karna took birth in the Krita yuga as Prahlada in the mundane world and later is reborn as Sri Vyasaraaja in the Kali yuga. It is none else than this Vyasaraaja, who is the Guru in the changed scenario, while Narada is the one, who, as a disciple takes the holy initiation from his Guru, Vyasaraaja.

How can this happen, when Sri Vyasaraaja has taken birth in the Kali yuga, whereas it was in the Krita yuga that Narada chanted the glory of Lord Narayana, for the benefit of Leelavathi (and of Prahlada developing in her womb)? The curiosity about this will be stifled by what is contained further in this chapter.

Interestingly, when Sri Prahlada takes birth as Sri Vyasaraaja in the Kali yuga, Sri Narada is also born as one Srinivasa Naik, who later takes the holy initiation from Sri Vyasaraaja and gets introduced to the spiritual world as Purandara Dasa.

The Guru, at this point, is Sri Vyasaraaja and his disciple Purandara Dasa.

Just as Prahlada becomes a celebrity through the spiritual influence of his Guru, Narada, Sri Vyasaraaja's tutelage makes Purandara Dasa too no less renowned.

That Sri Purandara Dasa's devotional compositions on the glory of the Lord are still pervading the spiritual world needs no mention, as even today they are rendered with great veneration and zest in the bhajans.

We are familiar with the compositions of Sri

therefore be necessary for us to know how he fits into the life story of Sri Raghavendraswami - in other words, in the Vyasaraja charitra that signifies the earlier birth of Sri Raghavendra. How and under what circumstances Purandara Dasa had obtained his holy initiation from Sri Vyasaraja and in what manner his life, before and after the holy initiation, had been under the powerful influence of Lord Narayana is to be known by all. While these are set out in the next chapter, what requires a logical analysis here is the imbibing of spiritual knowledge by Prahlada from Sri Narada.

Today, Sri Raghavendraswami is showering on his devotees his blessings as a Kamadhenu and a Kalpavruksha. But when he lived his mundane existence as Venkatanatha, how much he had suffered! He could not satisfy his hunger then as his penurious circumstances did not permit him to have even a single meal a day. Ironically, he had faced nothing but misery in his younger days, while today thousands are enjoying the benefit of his grace and getting sumptuously fed.

Even as Prahlada, how many trials and tribulations he had to face through Hiranyakasipu and put up with them! But, what was it that gave him the strength to bear those? Undoubtedly, it was the Narayana nama!

In this Kali yuga, we mortals face everyday scores of ordeals - but what is the lesson that Sri Raghavendra and Sri Prahlada have passed on to us? Whatever be the sufferings or problems confronting one, steadfast belief in the Almighty and his prowess, will mitigate them-nay even cause their extinction.



What do Ramayana, Mahabharata and other Puranas draw our attention to? It is the gospel truth that dharma is an indestructible weapon.

We should hence develop a resolute mind and the object of this work is also to draw the readers to that end. Surely, if the mind is conquered and we are possessed of unflinching faith in the Almighty, we could be able to bear all the adversities in life with composure, circumventing their ill-effects and wresting happiness in the end.

In Prahlada's life, it was Narada's powerful bearing that was responsible for his turning towards the Almighty, with unswerving mind and consequently emerging victorious against all the evil forces set against him, by enduring all the ordeals that he was subjected to.

At this juncture, a question may arise as to how Narada's influence over Prahlada could have been the cause for the latter's success against all odds. In fact, we have seen that Sanku Karna, the celestial being of Svarga Loka, was born as Prahlada in the demonic tribe, in the terrestrial world, through a curse by Brahma Deva at the time of his doing devotional service for the Mahabhakti puja. And Sanku Karna, overcome by fear, had at that time prayed to Vayu Deva, who had enlightened him, 'Sanku Karna, don't be upset by the curse of Brahma. There is a Divine purpose behind everything. The curse on you is no exception to it. You will be going through several births in the mundane world to spread devotion towards the Supreme Being and the

you several good things on the earth, as ordained by the Lord.'

This will no doubt create an impression that Sanku Karna, the heavenly being that he had been, could have himself known this when born as Prahlada, without the necessity of Narada's intervention in the scheme of things. But, it must again be said here distinctly that it was Narada's influence as a Guru that was the causative factor for Prahlada's success in overcoming all the trials.

Although Prahlada was Sanku Karna re-born, there should have been someone to enlighten this or to cause self-realisation by the subject himself, that he had been what he was in the earlier birth, but born again in a different set of circumstances. It is the spiritual influence of the master known as Guru upadesa or imparting of spiritual knowledge by the teacher that creates the mental development conducive for such enlightenment.

A question may naturally arise whether such spiritual influence by the Guru was necessary even at the stage when Prahlada was growing in the womb of his mother, Leelavathi.

Yes, there could have been no other way, as it was the most opportune time then. For, even before Prahlada's emergence in this world, Hiranyakasipu had strictly ordained that except his name, none other's should be taught or chanted. And after the birth of Prahlada, he had appointed Sukracharya as the master of his son and exhorted to him that the lad should be taught to utter, 'Om Hiranyaya Namaha'.

It was to prevent Prahlada from falling under the influence of Sukracharya's teachings that sage Narada stole a march over him and caused Prahlada to be influenced by Narayana nama, even whilst in the womb of Leelavathi. And it was that spiritual lesson absorbed by the yet to be born child that later could make him stand against his father, his Guru and against adharma, resulting in righteousness triumphing in the end.

In Kurukshetra, before the commencement of the war between the Pandavas and the Kauravas, Arjuna tells Lord Krishna, his charioteer, 'Krishna! Please station my chariot between the two armies; I would like to see those who are arrayed there and are pining to fight the battle. I should also know with whom I have to engage myself in this fight.'

Krishna positions the chariot between the warriors on either side and Partha looks at those who had assembled there to clash.

'Krishna! Those for whom we crave for kingdom, wealth and the world are here now, casting aside their yearnings for life and riches, ready to attack at this battle field. Gurus, fathers, sons, grandfathers, grandsons, uncles, nephews and all other near and dear ones are here to fight the combat, without the least attachment for their lives, Madhusudhana! Even if they come to kill me, I shall not cause their death,' grieved Arjuna then, throwing aside his bow and arrow in dejection and sinking on the plank of the chariot.

In chapter I of Bhagavad Gita, known as 'Arjuna Vishadayoga', Lord Krishna proffers counsel to Arjuna,



o is in a disturbed state of mind and in the 'Viswarupa ndarsana yoga' the following observations of His find ce.

'Arjuna, all these persons have already been slain me. But I have made you instrumental now, for their struction. Therefore, get up and win over your emies! Drona, Bhishma, Jayatrata, Karna and their diers have already suffered extermination by me! u only have to kill them now. Don't grieve over this. gage in the war and emerge victorious.'

The Lord will, at times grace us Himself. On other asions, He will use others as tools to do good to us.

Likewise, Sri Raghavendra too will shower his ediction himself or make others instrumental in the elation of his supernatural powers.

If analysed further, Sri Raghavendraswami himself . medium for us, as Divine grace can easily be had ough him.

Sri Raghavendra had suffered poverty when young, thousands are fed sumptuously to this day through powers, which cause also mystic things to happen. it he is kept alive till this day to radiate his benevolent ence on us, is attributable only to the grace of nan Narayana.

But why did the same Narayana play the drama of ossessing a person enjoying enormous wealth and cing him go about the streets, singing hymns for ing his daily food from the noble-minded?

It is on account of this happening that the devotional ipositions of Purandara Dasa are still popular. The

transformation of the affluent Seenappa Naik as the devout Purandara Dasa was truly a Divine act.

The re-birth of Narada as Purandara Dasa is unravelled in the next chapter, in a brief manner.

Lord Narayana had graced Seenappa Naik bountifully. But what was it that the Almighty had got from him? It was a worthless coin! And could it have met the needs of celebrating an Upanayana?

Indeed, the drama enacted by the Lord before Seenappa Naik's wife, is most fascinating.

Oh, when Naik's wife is caught in a fix and cries, 'Narayana, you only have to save me from this predicament.....', what follows thereafter will hold one in eager expectation.

Let us get absorbed in that interesting episode, in the chapter following this.

### **SEENAPPA NAIK, WHO GAVE A WORTHLESS COIN!**

In Purandaragadh near Pune, a Brahmin was flourishing in the business of buying and selling diamonds, precious stones and jewellery. His wife was one Ratna Bai. True to her name, she was always bedecked in gems and gold ornaments.

The couple was childless, though endowed with riches. Both of them ruminated often that despite all the

wealth at their disposal, they did not have an offspring to shower their affection upon.

They journeyed to Tirupati and prayed to Lord Srinivasa, giving vent to the sorrow in their hearts.

After some time, the Lord answered their prayers and by His grace Ratna Bai was in the family way. The joyous husband looked after her with utmost care and attention, during her pregnancy.

In 1484, Ratna Bai gave birth to a male child that was charming and attracted everyone. Since Lord Srinivasa had blessed its birth, the child was named as Srinivasa Naik. It was brought up with great love and fondness and was affectionately called as Seenappa Naik.

At the proper age, the boy's upanayanam was performed. The father then inducted him in his diamond trading and Seenappa Naik showed great interest in learning its intricacies, while engaged in the business.

When eighteen, he was married off to a young bride by name Lakshmi Bai. But Srinivasa Naik was always drawn towards his profession and after his father's demise, became obsessive with the calling he was pursuing.

In due course he could excel in his field and amass enormous wealth. As a result, he came to be known as Navakoti Seenappa (millionaire Seenappa) and Navakoti Narayana.

Though blessed with a virtuous spouse, progeny and riches, a discontented Seenappa Naik's mind was

always hovering around how he should become more opulent.

Seenappa was not of a charitable disposition, despite his affluence. A miserly type, he would never be inclined to help anyone. His parsimony and niggardliness can best be explained by citing an example of what his wife had experienced once.

One night, Seenappa Naik dreamt that his wife was giving alms to a beggar. Although the mercy extended was only in dream, the miser started pestering her often with the query, 'Lakshmi Bai, did you give food to a mendicant?' But, his wife's negative reply was unconvincing to him and as a result, he chose to eat less for a few days! One may well imagine the extent of his greed, if in compensation of what his wife had proffered in a dream, he should, in reality have eaten insufficiently for a few days!

While so, an aged Brahmin once came to his shop, when he was present there.

'I say, I need your help,' said the visitor.

'Have you come to buy or sell things?', asked Seenappa Naik, without even lifting his head, eyes fixed on the cash-box.

'No please, I have to perform the upanayanam of my son. Being too poor, I need succour. You have to lend a helping hand to me and I have come for that only'.

'Financial help, is it? Please do get out of this place and don't waste my precious time', bawled out the shop-



owner and showed him the door, without even looking at his face.

But the caller was adamant and came to the shop, the next day also.

'I say, I know how much wealth you have.'

'If so, should I be giving it away to you, in heaps?'

'I am aware that even the ruler of the Vijayanagar empire has at times sought your help.'

'He will borrow and return promptly. But you are penniless; therefore quit this place.' The shop-owner had again not raised his head to see the visitor.

The old man however kept on calling at the shop everyday, for about six months. But, Seenappa Naik continued turning him out, without even seeing him.

At last, one day, he contemptuously threw a worthless coin in the hands of the old man, saying, 'You have this for performing the upanayanam of your son.'

The old man was taken aback when he saw that it was only a pie that had been offered to him - a coin of least value - and that too a worthless one that cannot be exchanged.

'Oh, how can I perform upanayanam with this? Please be merciful.'

'Even this mercy has been extended, only because you have been coming daily bothering me. Now get lost from here,' shouted Srinivasa Naik and drove the old man from there as usual, without seeing his face.

It then flashed in the visitor's mind that since the trader was a hard nut to crack, his wife should be approached for monetary assistance. So he called on Lakshmi Bai at her residence and she came out.

The lady was told what all had taken place, with a plea that at least she should help.

'Oh sir, can you imagine what will happen if my husband gets to know that you were here. Even for the alms supposed to have been given by me in his dream, he was furious and erupted like a volcano. Please therefore get away from here.'

'No madam, with this worthless pie I cannot do anything. With so much riches in your house, if you cannot spare something, is it just?'

'Everything here belongs to my husband. So, how can I give any of those?'

'If so, can you part with at least what belongs to you?'

'You mean what I possess?'

'Yes, the nosering that you are wearing must be yours and as per custom, you should have got it as a gift from your mother's house.'

'.....'

'Why are you hesitating? Nothing will happen. Please unscrew it and hand it over to me.'



Lakshmi Bai, convinced that there was reason in the argument, parted with the piece, there being no other alternative for her.

Strangely, the old man did not take the ornament to any other person for sale, but approached the same Seenappa, who had passed off a worthless coin to him.

'Appa, you had no mind to give me something in charity. Please now take this nosering and give me its value in cash.'

'Possessing this ornament, why has he been seeking charity?' thought Seenappa, taking it in his hand. And as soon as he examined it, he felt a chillness passing through his body.

'Where from did you get this priceless ornament? Alright, be here, I shall fetch the money from my house.' So saying, the money-lender packed the thing in a bit of cloth, sealed it and put it away in his safe. He then closed the shop and sprinted towards his house.

Panting for breath, he ran inside his house, calling, 'Lakshmi Bai, Lakshmi Bai'. And when his wife appeared before him, the nosering was found missing on her person and so he became enraged and shouted, 'Where is your nosering?'

Overcome by fear, Lakshmi Bai uttered incoherently, 'Swami, that one....' and then inwardly praying to the God managed to tell, 'Yes, I had an oil bath today, therefore I have removed it and kept it inside'.

But, Seenappa Naik, not convinced by the reply, said in a commanding tone, 'Let me see it, bring it here', much to the consternation of his wife.

Lakshmi Bai then went inside, baffled and upset that she had to tell a lie to her husband, which she was not given to. She felt that she should not present herself before him again, without the nosering - the thought leading her to an instant decision.

In consequence, she determined to end her life then and there, rather than appearing before her husband without the ornament.

### **MY WEALTH IS HARI!**

Lakshmi Bai, engrossed in the thought that there was no purpose in delaying matters any further, prayed to the Almighty with a resolve.

'Oh Narayana, you always shower your devotees with your merciful grace, when they are in distress. But what a trial is this for me now! Circumstances have conspired up against me to utter a lie and for having been unsympathetic towards an old man, I am to lose my life now. Will my husband spare me otherwise for what has happened - I would rather prefer dying here and now.' With these thoughts in mind, she hurriedly took off the diamond ring she was wearing and rubbing it in a cup of water, was intent upon gulping the liquid, to end her life. And lo, when the cup was taken to her lip, she heard the noise of something falling in it. The next moment, the nosering that had been gifted away by her was found in

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the contents of the cup! She then ran with it to her husband and handing it to him declared, "Here is my nosering".

Seenappa Naik could not make out anything. He had come there on the pretext of fetching money, only to test his wife. Being sure that it was his wife's nosering that had been brought to him, he had rushed home, leaving the old man at the shop. But here the ornament of his wife is found in her possession!

Seenappa, at once ran to his shop and without even seeing whether the old man was present there or not, opened the shop and the chest inside and found the sealed packet undisturbed. But when the seal was broken and the packet unwrapped, lo, the nosering was missing! Shocked at this, he came out to look for the old man, but found him also to have vanished from there, leaving him all the more dumbfounded!

'How this could have happened,' he started wondering in a state of confusion and bewildered perplexity. But in an instant, he got enlightenment, in a flash as it were, from the back of his mind and ran home to tell his wife what all had happened.

On hearing the narration, his wife was quick to apologise, telling him, 'Please do pardon me, Swami.'

She then recounted to him most emotionally how she had parted with the piece of ornament to the old man and had been driven to the point of putting an end to her life and by the grace of God had been saved from that predicament. She put forth strongly her belief that the



one who had called on them could only have been the Almighty in human form.

Seenappa Naik, at that very moment, was rid of his madness for riches. As a result, his heart poured out, 'Aiyo Lakshmi, I had not raised my head to see even on a single occasion the Divine being who had been a regular visitor for six months, worrying me day in and day out, for monetary help. Oh, what a sinner I am. From now onwards, I shall engage myself in nothing but devotion towards Hari, that Narayana, whom I had missed seeing, but am now eager to know about!'

He then walked out of his house with his wife and children pronouncing to those around him, 'This house, riches and all other things are not my possession. They all belong to that Hari.'

'Realizing Hari, is going to be my pursuit and enjoyment. All these materialistic things are mere dust before His excellence. If so willed by Him, He can give the entire world in our hands. Oh, how foolish I have been in not turning my attention towards Hari, all these years'. So saying, he started walking along the streets, with his family.

His relatives and those gathered there, tried to restrain him from taking the extreme step that he was resorting to, but their efforts were in vain. Their exhortation that since he had a sort of awakening, he could turn out to be devout and lead a happy life thenceforth, by being generous and noble towards the poor, fell on deaf ears.



His wife appealed, "Swami, instead of leaving all these riches as they are, they could be gifted to the Brahmins and the needy ones." But Seenappa Naik argued, 'When all these are not meant to be my belongings, how do I have the right to gift it to others' and departed towards Pandharpur, his family too following suit thereafter.

While on his journey, he reached Vijayanagar empire, with a feeling of contentment at heart.

### **SRI VYASARAJA AND PURANDARA DASA**

It was the time when Krishna Deva Raya was ruling the Vijayanagar empire. Sri Vyasaraja too was there at that time.

Srinivasa Naik hastened there, to meet the saint. On having darshan of the Rajaguru, he fell at his feet and offered obeisance to him. He then narrated to him all the happenings.

Sri Krishna Deva Raya, who also heard them, started wondering, 'Ah, is it the same Srinivasa Naik who has helped my government with finances, presenting himself before me now as one who has renounced everything?'

Srinivasa Naik then had from Sri Vyasaraja his holy initiation and the appellation Purandara Dasa. The guru's spiritual influence enabled Srinivasa Naik to get enlightenment about his earlier birth. The spiritual

mentor blessed him, 'Like the Narayana nama you had earlier passed on to me as your teaching, may you now serve the cause of spreading Hari nama and Divine worship to the masses. May your devotional compositions with the holy tag "Purandara Vittala" confer spiritual benefit to the humanity.'

Sri Vyasaraja, thus graced Purandara Dasa with his blessings, to be in service of God. It is to be recalled here that Sri Vyasaraja signifies the earlier birth of Sri Raghavendra, while Sri Purandara Dasa is Narada re-born.

After this, many mysterious things have happened in the life of Sri Purandara Dasa. That all those were due to the grace of the Guru, was his strong belief and how true it was!

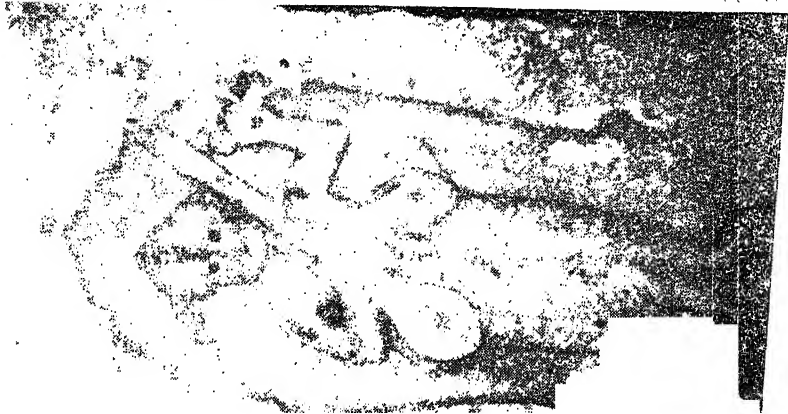
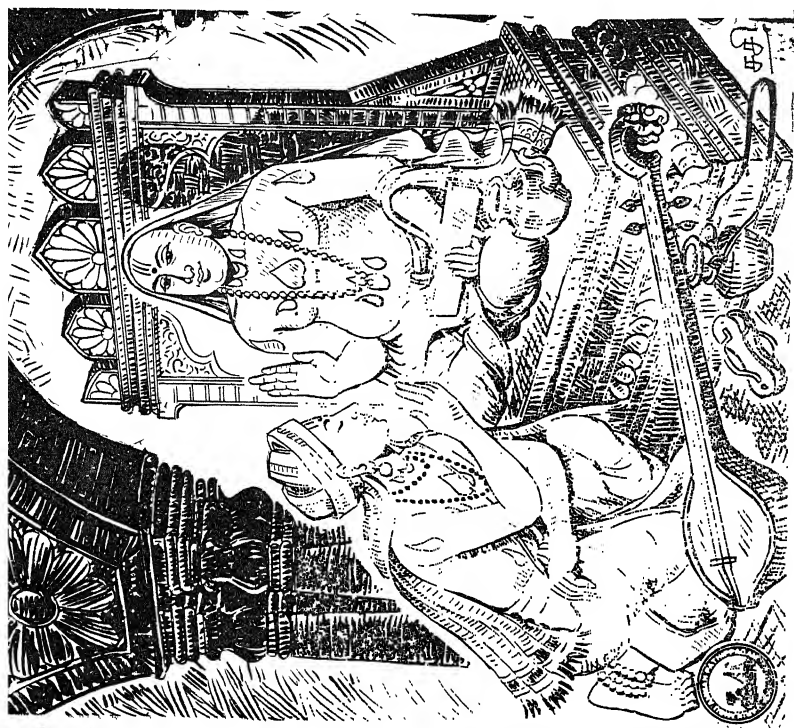
'Without Guru's blessing, Divine grace is unattainable. Even if the Almighty is not happy, Guru's grace can be had, but if the Guru is displeased, there can be no mercy from any quarters', is the philosophy of Purandara Dasa, delivered by him eloquently in the following composition of his, which is still popular.

"Guruvina Gulamanaguvathanaka

Doreya dhannamukuthi".

In Purandara Dasa's life, every occurrence had a purpose and the reason behind every one of his meaningful compositions can easily be discerned. His hymnic compositions number about 4,75,000.

It was not merely as Seenappa Naik that he traded in pearls. In one of his musical compositions too, Purandara Dasa offers to humanity genuine pearls,



strung in the thread of wisdom, in the following stanza that carries the same meaning.

"Muthu Kolleero - Jarraru Muthu Kolleero,

'Gnanavembo Daradalli ponisida divya Muthu".

In fact, Purandara Dasa's life deserves to be written as a separate work. The mysterious happenings in his life - all engineered by the Supreme Power - are truly spine-chilling. Further expatiation on these has been refrained from, since this is a writing on Sri Raghavendraswami's mystiques. But with the blessings and grace of Sri Raghavendra Guru, I am longing to write a book exclusively on Sri Purandara Dasa.

Let us now get absorbed in knowing about Sri Purandara Dasa's spiritual powers, by scanning just one incident, before going to the next chapter.

Some disciples of Sri Vyasaraaja were envious that their Guru had a special attachment towards Purandara Dasa. They therefore conspired and threw away the writings of Dasar, with an aversion that they did not deserve to be kept aside their master's. But the palm leaf writings, mysteriously got back to their original place and this happened every time they tried the trick.

Sri Vyasaraaja, knowing all this, thought that he should reveal to others the extraordinary powers of Sri Purandara Dasa.

Accordingly, one day, when Purandara Dasa was wringing his upper cloth, the guru asked him innocently,

Purandara Dasa, what harm has the upper cloth caused to you?'

'Swami, the cloth veiling in the Panduranga temple, had caught fire and I was just quelling it,' said Dasar, to amusement and derisive laughter of others.

On hearing it, Sri Vyasaraja called one of the emissaries and directed him to find out the position from the temple. The disciple heard the people at the temple saying, 'Purandara Dasa was here just now and has put out the fire caused by the carelessness of one of the oil-bearers'. As soon as he heard this, the emissary, realizing the greatness of Purandara Dasa, rushed back to apprise the others of what he had come to know about.

Once, the Lord Himself, disguised as one Appanna Jagavathar, got thumped on His head by Purandara Dasa, with a copper vessel as a medium. Later, in another occurrence, involving the theft of a bangle, Purandara Dasa was tied to a pillar and flogged, but an ethereal voice from the Heavens was heard telling, 'I am not the thief, I am the one' and ordaining that the pillar where Dasar had been tied should be worshipped, before doing puja to Him. In line with this, such practice is still followed in Pandharpur and the portive pillar has come to be known as 'Dasar's pillar'.

When set to write, so many incidents crowd the mind. But limiting it to whatever has been said till now, should examine at this stage what lessons can be derived from Dasar's life.

However rich one may be, life is meaningless without Hari bhakti or devotion towards the Supreme Reality. We humans do aspire for wealth, but when it is at hand, Divine worship should not be forgotten or neglected.

It is not necessary that one should seek food like Purandara Dasa, walking along the streets with a lute in the right hand, anklets tied around the legs, a vessel dangling from the shoulder and the left hand clasping a chappala. What is required is Hari bhakti at heart. This is the reason why the Lord has made this revelation to us through Purandara Dasa. Undoubtedly, it was only through intense bhakti that Purandara Dasa could reach the Heaven bodily.

In the next chapter, we shall be coming across another disciple of Sri Vyasaraaja - but what his greatness is and who he is need mentioning here.

Sri Raghavendraswami once observed Chatur Masya Vrata at an Anjaneya temple near Manvi. At that time, he found one day, a person standing beyond the 'Dwaja stamba' and beckoned him inside. But the visitor said, 'No Swami, I am a harijan and cannot come inside' and Sri Raghavendraswami, at that moment recounts to him, 'Appa, when I was Vyasaraaja in the earlier birth, you were my disciple then. Yes, you were Kanaka Dasa at that time and a shepherd by birth. God however makes no distinction and all are equal before Him'.

It is this episode of Kanaka Dasa that is going to thrill us.

## KANAKA NAYAKA! GO TO SRI VYASARAJA

Sri Kanaka Dasa has an important place in the life story of Sri Raghavendraswami. It was the custom then that during the Chatur Masya Vrata, mustard could not be added in the food preparations of Sri Mutt in the Naivedya (devotional offering) for Sri Moolamma. Sri Raghavendra however relaxed its servance for the sake of a harijan, who was Kanaka Dasa re-born. We have seen this in part I, under the caption, 'God will change anything for the Bhakta.'

Sri Udipi Krishna had turned his direction to the west to give darshan to a low-born shepherd, when that shepherd had taken birth as Kanaka Dasa. We are to see in this chapter a few things about Kanaka Dasa who had such rare privilege, as also the reason for the Lord loving him that way.

Purandara Dasa and Kanaka Dasa were contemporaries. Both had obtained their holy initiation from Sri Vyasaraja, who was also responsible for their greatness being known to the world.

Kanaka Dasa too, like Purandara Dasa, has composed numerous hymns in praise of the Lord. Purandara Dasa was very affluent and later became a devotee (servant of God). Likewise, Kanaka Dasa too changes his status and becomes a Dasa, after having been the chieftain of a tribe. Curiously, his early life too is most exciting.

The tribe of Kurubas (or shepherds) was considered a lowly one in the then society. But, Kanaka, though belonging to that sect, was leading a royal life, as the head of his clan. The episode of his becoming a servant of God, sacrificing the exalted position that he enjoyed in his group, will be most absorbing.

Kaginela was a place in Karnataka. It was the capital of a small domain, with shepherd Kanaka as its chief.

Kanaka was also known as Thimman, since he was born due to the grace of the Lord of the Seven hills. Thimman had been blessed with Midas touch and whatever he laid his hand upon turned into Kanaka or gold. Hence the name Kanaka.

Kanaka Nayaka was well-built and excellent at warfare. He would make enemies turn back and flee the battlefield. Vanquishment was something unknown to him.

Unlike Seenappa Naik, Kanaka was not one without Hari bhakti or devotion towards God. On the contrary, he was very devout and had built and dedicated a beautiful temple to Lord Adikesava, which he was looking after worshipfully.

Kanaka's valour was attributable to his having been born as an amsa of the God of Death. He could, as such, destroy all his enemies.

Such heroic and devout person is once put to test by the Almighty. Consequently, in the next clash



Against the foes, the position becomes topsy-turvy for Anaka.

Yes, the armies of other territorial chiefs came in large numbers, with all their might, to fight the battle. Anaka Nayaka himself took command and crossed swords in the war, but was defeated in the end. More fierce combats had been won by him in the past, but this time, it was not to be so now.

While he felt wounded in his heart, his body too had suffered severe bruises that caused unbearable pain to him. Writhing in pain he weeps, 'Adikesava, what is this all for me? For having worshipped you, should this be my condition? Have I gone to the battle out of pride? It was only to halt the progress of the adversaries that I had engaged in this fight and is this the prize for my devotion towards you?'

And lo, a Divine voice was then heard telling, 'Anaka, do you want your pain and wounds to vanish?'

'I can't really bear them, they should heal soon'.

'If so, can you relinquish your exalted position?'

'Me, forgoing my position?'

'Should you not be rid of the extreme agony you are suffering?'

'Alright, please relieve my pain first, later I shall agree to whatever you propose.'

'All that is unnecessary. You express your willingness to become a Dasa and that very moment your wounds will get healed.'

Kanaka thought it to be strange and wondered whether such a thing could happen. He then wanted to test the advice of the incorporeal voice and said, "s".

Kanaka, in an instant felt something slithering on his body. The wounds, as a result, healed in no time and this strange experience caused a lightening of his heart.

'Oh, how wonderful it is', vented Kanaka.

'You should become a servant of God. For that you should go to Vyasaraaja immediately and obtain from him his holy initiation,' said the voice of the Unseen.

## **HOLY INITIATION FROM SRI VYASARAJA**

Kanaka Nayaka, after making efforts to know the whereabouts of Sri Vyasaraaja, presents himself before him and narrates all the happenings, soliciting his holy initiation by the Rajaguru.

The saint was with his disciples then, outside the temple. Kanaka Nayaka kept himself at a distance from the holy group.

'Appa, why are you keeping aloof?'

'I am a Kuruba (shepherd), Swami.'

'Kuruba wants mantropadesa (holy incantation), is it so? For Kuruba, the mantra is "Kona mantra",' said Vyasaraaja.

Kanaka, with deep devotion, started chanting constantly, 'Kona, Kona, Kona,' as told by Vyasaraaja.

While so, one day, a Kona (buffalo), in reality made its appearance before him. Sri Vyasaraaja, knowing that Kanaka was the amsa of Yama, had wantonly indoctrinated Kona mantra to him.

Kanaka, elated by the fruition of his holy chanting (that was in evidence right before him), came to Vyasaraaja with the buffalo. The Rajaguru thought that something useful should be done with the help of the animal, as it had manifested itself through devout chanting of the mantra.

Kanaka, in the meanwhile, hastened to ask the guru, 'Swami, can I have the holy initiation now?'

'Yes , you can, but before that you have to do something,' said the saint.

'Yes, by all means it will be accomplished, Swami.'

'Look yonder, Kanaka! In the lake there, water is not retained because of the presence of huge rocks in the centre of it. Those big stones have to be removed and that is the task I am assigning to you.'

'Most certainly I shall complete the work Swami,' said Kanaka and left the place with the buffalo.

In quick time it was completed, Kanaka deploying the buffalo for the removal of the giant stones that were posing impediment to the storage of water in the lake. In Andhra Pradesh, the lake is still in existence, known by the name 'Vyasa Samudram'. A big rock removed by

the buffalo exists there to this day and it is referred to as 'Kona Thopu'.

Sri Vyasaraja was happy to see Kanaka having carried out what he had wanted. Kanaka was then subjected to the holy initiation as Dasa and given the holy name Kanaka Dasa.

The guru blessed him on the occasion saying 'Kanaka Dasa, Kaginele is your place and the temple you have built is for Adikesava. May you therefore spread Hari bhakti through your devotional compositions with the holy tag, Kaginele Adikesava'.

Kanaka Dasa, as desired by the Guru, stayed with him from then onwards, along with Purandara Dasa.

Vyasaraja, it may be recalled, had justified his special attachment towards Purandara Dasa, by exposing the latter's greatness, when the other disciples had thought differently about it (already seen in the chapter on Purandara Dasa). In a similar situation when the other sishtyas are displeased about the Guru's affinity towards Kanaka Dasa and openly comment on it, Sri Vyasaraja hits upon a plan to reveal the brilliance and prowess of Kanaka Dasa, to the others. Accordingly, it is exposed soon and this finds narration in the next chapter.



**SRI KANAKA DASA'S GREATNESS**

Sri Vyasaraja once called all his disciples and gave them each a plantain fruit, asking them to consume it unseen by anyone and to report back to him thereafter.

Everyone went separately and returned empty-handed, except Purandara Dasa and Kanaka Dasa.

'Kanaka Dasa, why have you brought back the fruit?' asked the guru.

'Swami, you had told that it should be eaten without being seen by anyone, but my Lord Adikesava is present everywhere and in every direction; therefore, without his knowledge how can I eat the fruit?' was the reaction of Kanaka Dasa that made others realize his wisdom.

On another occasion, the Rajaguru, pointing to a disciple, asked Kanaka Dasa, 'Will this person go to the Heaven?'

'No', said Kanaka Dasa and gave the same negative reply repeatedly, when the saint went on pointing his finger towards the others, one by one. So, at one stage, Vyasaraja asked, 'Do you think you will go to the Heaven?'

At once, Kanaka Dasa replied, 'I may go, if I should.'

The other disciples thought this to be odd and vainglorious, their faces revealing their displeasure.





Sri Vyasaraja, looking at Purandara Dasa, asked him, 'What do you think is the hidden meaning of what Kanaka Dasa said?'.

Purandara Dasa explained that if possessiveness and egotism denoted by the expression 'I' should go (i.e. be conquered), only then the gateway to Heaven will be

thrown open and that is what was implied in the observation made by Kanaka Dasa.

On hearing this, those who had derided Kanaka Dasa earlier, regretted their action.

After this incident, Kanaka Dasa too goes out like Purandara Dasa, carrying a lute in his hand and singing hymns, to get the darshan of Udupi Krishna.

But he is neglected and insulted there, as it was thought in those times that Kuruba was an untouchable one, deserving the same treatment as an insect.

Kanaka Dasa, who comes there with all eagerness to see his Lord, is not permitted to get inside the temple. But, even with a heavy heart, the Dasa devotee circumambulates the temple on its outside, there being no other alternative for him. At that time, he goes to the hind side of the temple and standing there, pours out of his heart most emotionally a composition running as,

'Bagilanu theradu Sevayenu kodu Hariye

Koogidaru Dhvani Kelalillave Nara Hariye !'

In translation, it means, 'Opening the door, give me the privilege of your darshan, O Hari. Is not my voice reaching you, Nara Hari.'

As soon as the rendering of the composition was completed, Udupi Krishna made an about-turn to the westerly direction and at the same time a big fissure appeared in the wall at the back of the temple, through which the Lord gave a very delightful darshan to the



Kanaka Dasa, with misty eyes, had excellent darshan of Krishna, in the posture of the Lord holding a churning stick in his hand - the same Krishna that Madhwacharya had found in the block of Gopichandana and later worshipped by Sri Raghavendraswami, among other great ones.

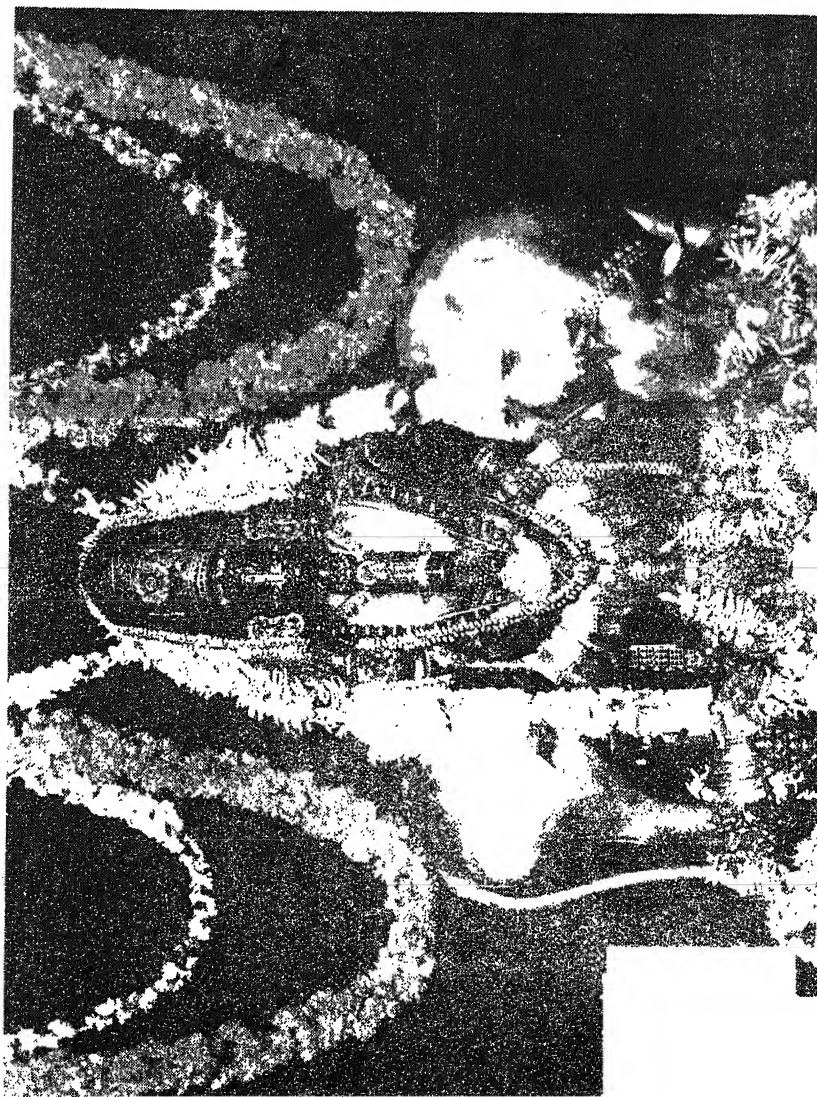
Lord Krishna thus changed His position for the sake of a true devotee, unable to bear the restraint of others.

The pontiff of the Mutt (one among the eight Mutts established by Madhwacharya), who was conducting the daily pujas in the temple at that time, was wonder-struck at seeing the idol of Lord Krishna turned in the Westerly direction.

On hearing the details of all that had happened, he called Kanaka Dasa and shared his exuberance with him. Those visiting Udupi can see a statue of Kanaka Dasa, just opposite the temple, as also witness everyone having darshan of Sri Krishna through an opening. In fact, Lord Krishna had created it for the sake of Kanaka Dasa, using his churning stick for the purpose. It is for this reason that it is referred to as, 'Kanakana Kidike' or Kanaka's window.

In the life of Kanaka Dasa, there are many mysterious happenings like this. But, for want of space, very little has been written.

Lastly, he is reported to have entered the sanctum sanctorum of the Adikesava temple at Kaginela, disappearing from there! But, some others recount the following:



When he went to Tirupati last, the temple authorities heard a Divine voice telling them, 'Bring my devotee, Kanaka Dasa, with due respects and honour'. They were all puzzled as to who that devotee was and were standing outside to receive him.

Kanaka Dasa, with Tambura in his hand, was coming there at that time and was asked by them, 'Swami, have you seen Kanaka Dasa? Where is he coming now?'

In reply, Kanaka Dasa says, 'He is ahead of the bhaktas coming behind and at the back of those going ahead,'indirectly throwing the hint that he was the person they were looking for.

Later, he had entered the holy precincts of the temple to have darshan of the Lord and had vanished from there, according to some. Whatever be the truth, Kanaka Dasa has most certainly entered into our hearts now.

We have briefly seen about Purandara Dasa and Kanaka Dasa, the worthy disciples of Vyasaraja. Also, much can be penned about another eminent preceptor, Sri Vadiraja, who was a contemporary of the two Dasas. Sri Vadiraja too was a disciple of the Rajaguru. It is my desire to write about him in Part 3, since in this coverage we have to know more about the mysterious happenings ascribable to the powers of Sri Raghavendraswami.

In the next chapter, we will come across another great personality, on knowing about whom, we would be

left marvelling at the happenings engineered by the Supreme Power.

Yes, Purandara Dasa, Kanaka Dasa and Sri Vadiraja had seen only Sri Vyasarja, the Rajaguru. But one well-known saint has seen not only Sri Vyasaraja but also the re-born personage, Sri Raghavendraswami.

This was not in dream, but in real life! And the great soul who had seen both the mundane appearances of Sri Raghavendraswami, was Sri Vijayeendra. We will get to know about him in the next chapter.

**THE GREAT SAINT WHO HAD  
SEEN TWO AVATARS OF  
SRI RAGHAVENDRASWAMI**

'Endowed with knowledge of all the sixty four arts, drawing adversaries under his magical spell, a renowned personality and one radiating wisdom that Sri Vijayeendra Thirtha was, I offer my obeisance to him.

As one who has passed on the wealth of knowledge to the virtuous ones and was the prime cause for evolving slokas and their meanings, Sri Sudhindra, the yogi, commands veneration and I offer my respects to him also.'

**-Sri Raghavendra Vijayam**

**(ch.I, 9, 10)**

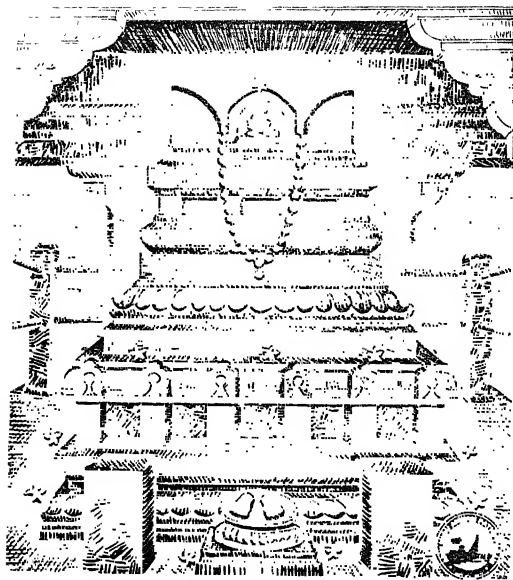
In the life history of Sri Raghavendraswami, this is a very important chapter. It is a rare blessing to be able to see the two avatars of Sri Raghavendraswami.

We are now going to know about Sri Vijayeendra who had seen both Sri Vyasaraaja and Sri Raghavendra, in person.

He was a disciple of Sri Vyasaraaja, but a paramaguru (master's guru) to Sri Raghavendra. Greater attention, is in fact needed here, to comprehend this.

Kumbakonam has several distinctions. Sri Raghavendra's early education was at that place. Even after taking to saintly life at Tanjore (Thanjavur), it was at Kumbakonam that Sri Raghavendra had stayed for a good number of years. The routine observances and rituals followed by Sri Raghavendra, detailed in 'Sri Raghavendra Vijayam', were all based on what had been noticed and known during his stay at Kumbakonam. The Kerala astrolgers' computation from horoscope, of Sri Raghavendraswami's longevity as 100, 300 and 700 years and the Swami's enlightenment on it, had taken place at Kumbakonam only. It was on account of these reasons that many had expected Sri Raghavendra's Brindavana pravesha to be at Kumbakonam itself.

It is held by some that the reason for Sri Raghavendra not entering the Brindavan at Kumbakonam is the existence of his paramaguru's Brindavan there.



Yes! Sri Vijayendra's Brindavan presents a majestic look in Kumbakonam in the Solaiyappan street, the bank of the Cauvery river. Those visiting the place should not miss seeing this Brindavan. Kumbakonam is a place where great saints like Sri Asaraja, Sri Raghavendra and a host of others have their holy foot upon.

It was Sri Sudheendra Thirtha, the guru of Sri Raghavendraswami who had arranged the coronation of Raghavendra and blessed its performance. And Sri Vijayendra Thirtha was the guru of Sri Sudheendra Thirtha. In other words, while Sri Raghavendra's guru was Sri Sudheendra, his paramaguru was Sri Vijayendra.

What requires mental noting here is the chronological sequence - Sri Vijayendra - Sri Sudheendra - Sri Raghavendra. Like having gone

downwards from Sri Vijayeendra to Sri Raghavendra, we are also to trace upwards from, Sri Vijayeendra to Sri Vyasaraaja! The inter-linking will then present itself for analysis. And only then it would be unravelled how Sri Vijayeendra had seen both Sri Vyasaraaja and Sri Raghavendra.

In a small village called Bannur, one Ramachar, who had no progeny, passed away suddenly. His wife Seethamma was to enter the funeral pyre along with the mortal remains of her dead husband (as was the custom then). Before that, she had to seek the blessings of an ascetic and as such, prostrated before Sri Brahmanya Thirtha, who was then on the bank of the Cauvery river, after his holy bath. He blessed her, 'Dheergha Sumangali Bhava', meaning that she should live long and pre-decease her husband (it being the belief that it is virtuous for the wife to meet her end, before the death of the husband). Seethamma was shocked at the contextual impropriety of the blessing and informed Brahmanya Thirtha about the death of her husband. The saintly person, on hearing it, accompanied her to her house and there, through his spiritual powers, brought the dead man back to life. He set forth at that time the desire that of the two children to be born to them, the first one should be handed over to the Sri Mutt. Accordingly, the child given to the Sri Mutt at its birth, later turned out to be Sri Vyasaraaja. This episode has been covered extensively in Part 1. What requires attention now is that Sri Vyasaraaja's guru was Brahmanya Thirtha.

Later, Sri Vyasaraaja himself is approached by a childless Brahmin for the saint's blessings and

accordingly the guru blesses him, "You will have progeny and the child to be born first must be handed to me".

The Brahmin was overjoyed at this and says, 'It will be done accordingly, Swami' and prostrates before the pontiff and gets up.

In due course, he becomes the father of a child and hands it over to the Sri Mutt, taking care to see that the child did not come into contact with mother earth at the time of its birth (as advised by the guru).

The child was deprived of mother's milk, as it had been brought away to the Sri Mutt, immediately after its birth. It was instead fed the milk with which Sri Vyasaraja had performed abhisheka to the Saligramas. The child therefore presented always a bright and radiant look. It was named as Vittala, since its face was shining like that of Vittala, the Lord Supreme.

Sri Vyasaraja, even when Vittala was a young boy, perceived his exceptional wisdom and initiated him into saintly way of life, bestowing on him the honorific 'Vishnu Thirtha'. He also made him stay with him and taught him all the sastras.

The guru, with an innate desire that after him, Sri Vishnu Thirtha should occupy the exalted seat of pontificate, (spotting him to be the fittest one for that), looked after the youngster with great attachment and care.

The succession to the exalted seat should as such have run as, Sri Brahmanya Thirtha - Sri Vyasaraja - Sri



Vishnu Thirtha (i.e., Sri Vijayeendra). But, it was not so, as would be evident from the following sequence.

Sri Vibhudendra - Sri Jitamitra - Sri Raghunandana - Sri Surendra - Sri Vijayeendra - Sri Sudheendra - Sri Raghavendra.

We have already seen the monastic order as Sri Vijayeendra - Sri Sudheendra - Sri Raghavendra. While so, it is the name of Sri Vyasaraaja, the guru of Sri Vijayeendra, that should appear before Sri Vijayeendra's. But, in the chain of names given above, Sri Surendra's finds a place -how this has come about requires an in-depth study here.

It must be borne in mind that to propagate the teachings of Madhwacharya and uphold the traditions left behind by him, three branches of pontifex (or three different mutts) came into being later and have since become famed as Sri Vyasaraaja Mutt, Sri Raghavendra swami Mutt, and Sri Uttaradhi Mutt (explanatory table in the next page). These mutts are functionally expanding and growing popular, every day.

Those who occupy the exalted seat adorned by Sri Vyasaraaja are referred to as belonging to the Vyasaraaja Mutt and the line of succession to the peeta occupied and made lustrous by Sri Raghavendra, is identified as Sri Raghavendraswami Mutt. The present head of Sri Raghavendraswami Mutt at Mantralaya, is Sri Sushmindra Thirtha.

Before Sri Raghavendra, Sri Raghavendraswami Mutt was known by the name Sri Vibhudendra Mutt (a

# SRI MADHWACHARYA'S LINE OF SUCCESSION

1. Sri Madhwacharya
2. Sri Padmanabha Thirtha
3. Sri Narahari Thirtha
4. Sri Madhava Thirtha
5. Sri Akshobhya Thirtha
6. Sri Jaya Thirtha
7. Sri Vidyadhi Raja

8. Sri Rajendra
9. Sri Jayadhwaja
10. Sri Purushothama
11. Sri Brahmanya
12. Sri Vyasaraja
13. Sri Vyasaraja Mutt)

8. Sri Kavindra
9. Sri Vageesa
10. Sri Ramachandra

11. Sri Vibhudendra
12. Sri Jitmitra
13. Sri Raghunandana
14. Sri Surendra
15. Vijayendra
16. Sri Sudheendra
17. Sri Raghavendra
- (Sri Raghavendraswami Mutt)

11. Sri Vidhyanidhi
12. Sri Raghunatha
13. Sri Raghuvarya
14. Sri Raghothama
- (Sri Uttarahi Mutt)

reference to the explanatory table will throw light on this).

Sri Surendra Thirtha belonging to the Vibhudendra Mutt, visited Vijayanagar once. Sri Vyasaraja was present there at that time and the Vijayanagar empire was then under the rule of Sri Krishnadevaraya.

Sri Surendra was amazed by the exuberant growth of Tulsi (Basil), in a forest-like place there. It was from there that Sri Vyasaraja was getting Tulsi for his daily puja and the luxurious growth of the plant could be attributed to its holy significance. Sri Surendra, on seeing the lush green Tulsi, offers it prayfully in great veneration to the Lord from the depth of his heart, uttering, "Sri Krishnarpana" (i.e. presenting worshipsfully to the feet of Lord Krishna).

A little after this, a disciple of Sri Vyasaraja comes there and as was the practice, plucks a large quantity of Tulsi leaves for puja and takes them to the Swami.

Sri Vyasaraja takes the Tulsi leaves for Archana during the puja and finds them all withered away, as if they had already been offered to the deity. He questions the disciple how it could have happened and the sishya tells that he had brought them as usual and nothing untoward had occurred on the way. But, the saint, through his insight, gets to know what had taken place.

The Rajaguru feels immensely happy about what had taken place and at the same time wonders how mere mental worship and utterance of the words "Sri Krishnarpana" could have carried so much spiritual

power. He then tells the emperor, Krishnadevaraya, about Sri Surendra Thirtha's greatness and suggests receiving him with special honours. Accordingly, the visiting saint was given a rousing welcome by the king.

Sri Surendra, though powerful through his spiritual attainments, forgets himself when he sees the young ascetic Sri Vishnu Thirtha and marvels how at that age he looked so radiant, the face reflective of profound wisdom.

During that day's puja, Sri Vishnu Thirtha's knowledge and learning is well gauged by Sri Surendra Thirtha.

After puja, it was the time for taking food. Sri Vyasaraja and Sri Surendra Thirtha of Vibhudendra Mutt, are seated before the plantain leaves laid for serving food. Sri Surendra was wanting to tell something, but holding himself in restraint every time. Sri Vyasaraja did not fail to notice this. However, he thought that Sri Surendra himself should be left to initiate the dialogue and so uttered the customary words of courtesy to the visiting saint, asking him, 'Can we now have Thirtha (Sanctified water), before commencing to take our food?'

'No please, I want a holy offering to be made to me' says Sri Surendra.

'Please ask me what you want and your desire will be fulfilled'.

'Yes, definitely. I am making this statement, seated before the plantain leaf'.

'You must offer me Vishnu Thirtha'.

Vyasaraja could have said, 'Oh, I wanted Vishnu Thirtha to be my successor to the peeta and if he is offered to you, he will go away to another mutt and the line of succession will change; therefore, you may ask for anything else - your mutt can, in fact, boast of several learned and competent disciples'. On the contrary he quietly said, 'Oh, you want Vishnu Thirtha, please take him by all means.'

Sri Surendra Thirtha, thereafter, gave Vishnu Thirtha the appellation 'Sri Vijayeendra Thirtha' and performed the holy investiture ceremony. The rare spectacle was witnessed by great ones like Sri Vyasaraja, Sri Purandara Dasa, Sri Vadiraja, Sri Kanaka Dasa and Sri Krishnadevaraya, in immense jubilation and satisfaction.

Sri Vyasaraja never thought for a moment that Sri Vijayeendra, who was earmarked for occupying his exalted seat, had become the head of Vibhudendra Mutt. He had known through his keen insight that this was the Divine Will, even as Sri Surendra had arrived in Vijayanagar.

The Rajaguru was well aware that Sri Vijayeendra, who was under his tutelage, was carrying Divine Blessings to be able to see Sri Raghavendra (as Venkatanatha) in his pre-sainthood days. Therefore, without hesitation, he complied with the request of Sri Surendra and gifted away that worthy disciple to him.

After this, Sri Vijayeendra stayed with Vyasaraja for some time, in the company of Sri Surendra.

He visited Udipi with Sri Vadiraja and had darshan of Sri Krishna. A mutt gifted to him at that time by Sri Vadiraja, is still attached to the Brindavan of Sri Raghavendraswami.

Sri Surendra, later brought Sri Vijayeendra to Thanjavur and thence to Kumbakonam. And everywhere, Sri Vijayeendra won over others in religious debates and contests.

At Kumbakonam, he had good darshan of Mangalambika and was thrilled. He could, through his spiritual powers, cast a magical spell over an entire army deployed for the seizure of Kumbakonam and thus stop its advancement. In commemoration of this, the idols of Sri Sarangapani and Sri Chakrapani, are carried in procession to the Sri Mutt at Kumbakonam even to this day.

One Gangadhara Pundit had once come to Kumbakonam from Kasi. He had come with the evil design that the invincible Vijayeendra should either be defeated or killed. The debating contest was over and Sri Vijayeendra was declared the winner.

'Punditji, I have won. But you have brought some poison to kill me, is it not? Let there be no trouble for you,' said Vijayeendra and gulped the poison himself. Appayya Dikshitar and other members of the learned group were stunned, not knowing what they should do. The poison gradually spread in the blood stream of Sri

Vijayeendra and his body changed its colour and became black. While the others were fearing that the worst was bound to happen, Sri Vijayeendra, with great devotion at heart, rendered Sri Narasimhashtakam (a sloka on Lord Narasimha) and lo, the poison spreading in his system was arrested and it came down too! Amazingly, it got also transferred to the idol of Sri Narasimha that was in puja, its neck absorbing the poison and turning blue in colour. Even today, this idol finds place in the puja of Sri Raghavendraswami Mutt.

Sri Vijayeendra's fame is unlimited, but we shall now see about Sri Vyasaraja and Sri Raghavendra.

After the departure of Sri Vijayeendra with Sri Surendra, Sri Vyasaraja made Sri Srinivasa Thirtha as the head of the Mutt and entered Brindavana at a place called Nava Brindavana, on the bank of the Thugabhadra river, on Phalguna Chathurthi day. At that time, Sri Purandara Dasa, Kanaka Dasa, Vadiraja, Sri Vijayeendra and many other bhaktas were present there.

Let us now move on to Kumbakonam.

Sri Surendra, long after having got Sri Vijayeendra from Sri Vyasaraja, arranged another disciple to take to sainthood, with the holy name 'Sri Sudheendra Thirtha', and the coronation was performed by Sri Vijayeendra.

- The exalted seat of the Sri Mutt thus came to be ornamented by all the three - Sri Surendra, Sri Vijayeendra and Sri Sudheendra.

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Whatever has been seen till now must be clear. Sir Vyasaraja had asked and got the infant from the parents, then brought him up and granted sanyasa, with the appellation "Sri Vishnu Thirtha". He was later given as an offering (to Sri Surendra) and becomes Sri Vijayeendra Thirtha, by holy initiation. He has spent the early part of his life with Vyasaraja and has also seen the latter entering the Brindavana.

Sri Vijayeendra has now to see Sri Raghavendra and only then it could be taken that he has seen both the avatars of Sri Raghavendra.

After Krishnadevaraya, Ramaraya was ruling the Vijayanagar empire. Madurai was then under the governance of Visva Naicker and Krishnappa Naicker and Thanjavur, ruled by Sevvappa Naik and Junior Sevvappa Naik.

In 1565, after Krishnadevaraya's period, Vijayanagar empire was in great distress. The battle of Talikot further compounded its misfortunes. Temples and palaces were destroyed and razed to the ground by a Mohammedan sect called 'Rakkasathangadis'.

As a result of this, Thimmanna Bhatta, who was, in the tradition of his forefathers, occupying the seat of the poet laureate in the Vijayanagar empire, had to leave the place, to eke out his livelihood elsewhere. On coming to know that Sevvappa Naik, who was then ruling at Tanjore, was a highly devout person, given to encouraging religious institutions, Thimmanna Bhatta travelled to that place with his wife, daughter,



Venkatamba and son Gururaja, to seek refuge in the Sri Mutt there, that was then under royal patronage.

Sri Surendra, by just asking a few questions, gauged the keen intellect of Thimmama Bhatta and took him in the fold of the Sri Mutt.

The pontiff, after some time, handed over charge of the Sri Mutt to Sri Vijayeendra (the disciple to whom he had granted sanyasa and brought there) leaving the place on a missionary tour. Later, Sri Surendra entered his Brindavan at Madurai. Kumbakonam, at that point of time, became the permanent base of the Sri Mutt.

Thimmanna Bhatta, as was customary then, got his daughter married off at a very young age. He also sent his son away to Gurukula for education and as a consequence, started missing the children. He went to Tirupati and prayed to the Lord for another son. And when he was intent on returning to Vijayanagar after the pilgrimage, its capital had been shifted to Penukonda. So Thimmanna Bhatta travelled to Kanchipuram with his wife Gopikamba and after having darshan of Lord Varadaraja, reached Bhuvanagiri in the end.

In due course, graced by Lord Venkatachalapathi, a handsome boy was born to Gopikamba. The child was named Venkatanatha, as the Lord of the Seven Hills had blessed its birth. Everyone felt that it was a Divine child and exclaimed so, in wonderment.

Thimmanna Bhatta and Gopikamba later came to the Sri Mutt at Kumbakonam with the child. Sri Vijayeendra and Sri Surendra were stunned by the

child's radiance and understanding at that age - recognizably so, because it is the same child that later became famed as Sri Raghavendraswami, who is alive to this day.

Sri Vijayeendra could see the prodigious child's growth till its boyhood. Although he could not see the boy's rise to the status of a pontiff and the conferment of the holy appellation 'Sri Raghavendra' (since Sri Vijayeendra had attained mukti and entered the hindavan much before that), it was indeed a rare privilege and a divine blessing for a person brought up by Sri Vyasaraja to have been able to see the younger days of Sri Raghavendra, many decades later.

This chapter requires close reading and comprehension and if things are not clear, further indulgence in reading the matter will not be a waste.

While going through the next chapter, the contents of this may be more intelligible and if still there is some uncertainty, further reading of both the chapters will likely be not superfluous. For, there is nothing odd or wrong in trying to grasp good things, over and over again. They will only help our spiritual development further.

A couple of chapters later, we will be fully immersed in the supernatural deeds of Sri Raghavendra, but as a prelude to it, we are now scanning the mysteries relating to his earlier births.



**SRI VIJAYEENDRA AND  
SRI RAGHAVENDRA**

Penning information about Sri Raghavendra is not that easy. In the 16th and 17th centuries, he had graced devotees in our land, living his mundane existence. Therefore, nothing can be written about him from the puranas or the stories handed down from generation to generation.

It is only about the earliest birth of Sri Raghavendra - as Prahlada - that one can obtain enlightenment from the Puranas. But facts about the later re-births call for deep research and study and only after repeated verifications, authentic details can be disseminated through writings.

Some descendants of Sri Raghavendra are still living in our midst and so too those of many others, who had occupied the peeta adorned and glorified by Sri Raghavendra. They are accessible even today for gathering all available information about the saint. Every episode is therefore presented to the readers, only after obtaining the necessary data from the connected persons (which obviously takes time). At times, even after deep study and research, there is an unavoidable discrepancy in the citation of dates relating to certain events in the life of the saint. While there is unanimity regarding their occurrence, the place and time of some of the happenings are at variance, leaving one baffled about them.

A few such events concerning Sri Vijayeendra and Sri Raghavendra are set out in this chapter. These will

provide not only facts not familiar hitherto, but also facilitate a better understanding of the earlier chapter.

Sri Vijayeendraswami was the paramaguru of Sri Raghavendra (i.e. his master's guru). Sri Sudheendra was the guru of Sri Raghavendra, and Sri Vijayeendra, the spiritual guide of Sri Sudheendra.

Sri Vijayeendra was well-versed and renowned in all the 64 arts. Since he had won over his adversaries in every art, he was conferred the honorific "Ajayya Vijayeendra", meaning the invincible one.

Sri Vijayeendra was the Rajaguru to rulers like Ramaraya of the Vijayanagar empire, Sri Visvanatha Naicker and Krishnappa Naicker of Madurai, Sri Sevvappa Naik and Chinna Sevvappa Naik of Tanjore. He had been a disciple of Sri Vyasaraaja (who was none else than Sri Raghavendra in his earlier birth). He had completed 104 religious works that carried priceless gems in their content.

Sri Vijayeendra is said to have entered the Brindavan in 1614 A.D. But there is also an opinion that it was much earlier - around 1595 A.D.

Like the controversy over the year of Sri Vijayeendra's attainment of mukti, there is also a divergence of view regarding the year of Sri Raghavendra's birth.

Sri Raghavendra's entry into the Brindavan was undoubtedly in 1671 A.D., there being no second opinion

on it. But there are disputes about the year of his birth, mentioned variously as 1581, 1595 and 1596.

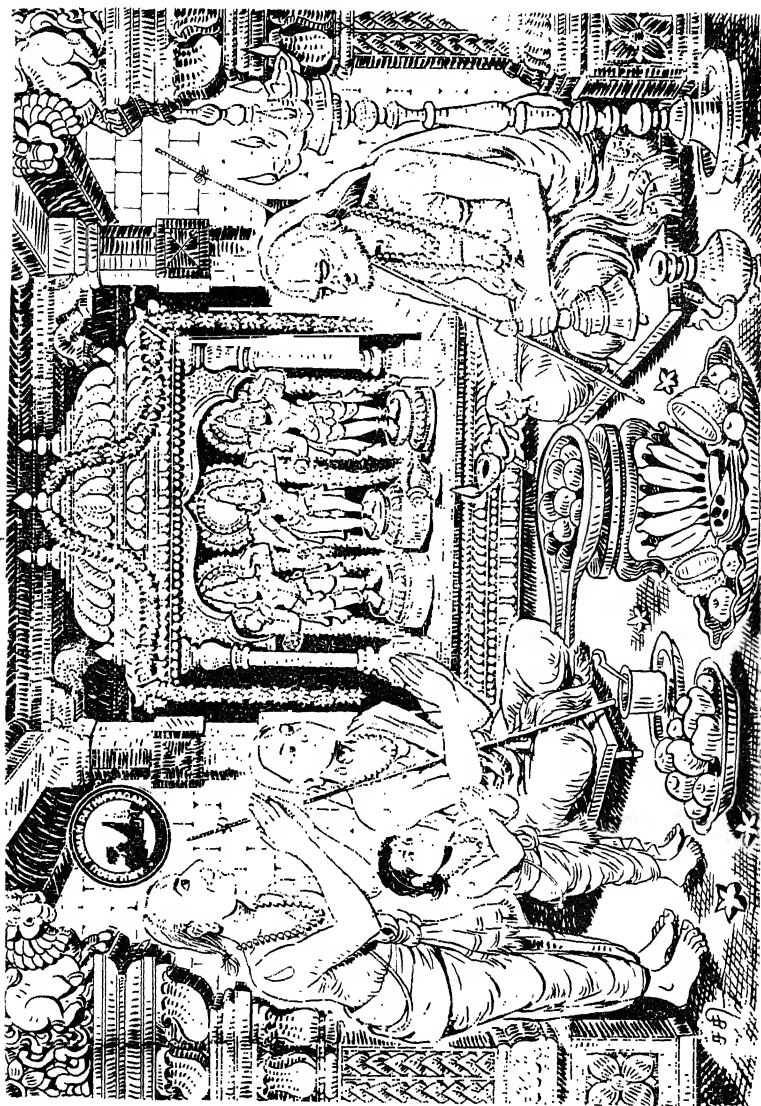
If Sri Raghavendra had been born in 1596, Sri Vijayeendra could not have attained mukti in 1595. Because, Sri Vijayeendra had seen Sri Raghavendra, even when he had grown to boyhood. It would therefore, be in order to conclude the date of Sri Vijayeendra's entering the Brindavan as 1614 A.D.

The descendants of Sri Raghavendra cite various happenings in support of the contention that he had lived upto 73, 75 or 78 years, while the others justify the view point that he had bodily lived for 90 or 100 years.

We have already seen that Sri Vijayeendra's Brindavan exists in Kumbakonam. In the 1994 edition of the publication of Sri Vijayeendra's life history (released there), several miracles ascribable to his spiritual powers have been detailed, but the coverage is silent on the chronicling of his birth and his attainment of mukti.

Raja Sri Gururajachar has written in Kannada a book titled, 'Ajayya Vijayeendraru', a translation of which has been released in Tamil. In Pages 78 and 79 of that version, an intimate conversation between Sri Vijayeendra and Sri Sudheendra is mentioned, the substance of which is rendered here, inter alia.

"Sri Rama Navarathri celebrations that were being conducted methodically in the Sri Mutt every year, had commenced and scholars were arriving there in good numbers. Among them was one from Madurai and Sri Lakshminarasimhachar was his name. He was the



husband of Sri Venkatamba, the sister of the illustrious and venerable Sri Raghavendraswami.

In the purvashrama days, Sri Raghavendraswami was known by the name Venkatanatha. It was his elder brother Gururaja who had performed the upanayanam of Venkatanatha and taught him his early lessons. Later, he had also arranged for Venkatanatha's further studies under the tutelage of his brother-in-law Sri Lakshminarasimhachar.

The distinguished Lakshminarasimhachar had brought with him the young boy, Venkatanatha, for participating in the activities connected with the festival.

The Sri Rama Navami celebrations went off very well for 9 days. It was an exceptional sight to see those festivities. Sri Vijayeendra, at the ripe old age of 97, did abhisheka and aradhana to Sri Moola Rama with his own hands and his beloved disciple Sri Sudheendra was by his side, helping him in the performance of the puja.

It was then that there was a personal dialogue between the two.

Sri Vijayeendra said:

'Sudheendra, have you closely observed the lad Venkatanatha brought here by Sri Lakshminarasimhachar, our Asthana Vidwan (learned pundit of the Mutt)? Oh, how much learning his face reflects and how very captivating are his looks and the lustre emanating from his person! You are aware that he is the worthy son of the great scholar Sri Thimmanna Bhatta,

who was our Asthana Vidwan. But do you know that he was also my Guru?’

When Sri Sudheendra heard this, he was astounded and taken by pleasant surprise.

Sri Vijayeedra thereafter continued his talk.

‘Listen to this secret. About 80 years ago this happened, but it is still fresh in my memory.

One day, my gurus Sri Surendra and Sri Vyasaraaja and my comrades Sri Vadiraja, Sri Purandaradasa and Sri Kanakadasa and myself, were all seated in an informal gathering.

All of a sudden, my guru, Sri Vyasaraaja, smiled imperceptibly.

“What does this mean, Swami?” I asked my Guru.

He answered saying, “There is one more re-birth for me. And when in a flash I had the realization that even at that time, I may have to do Divine service and grace the devotees, it made me smile a bit at what is in store for me.”

I remembered the words now and with those recollections, when I looked up at Venkatanatha, I could, through my insight get the enlightenment that he was the one born earlier as my Guru, Sri Vyasaraaja.

Please grant him sainthood and hand over the Sri Mutt to him. That is my last wish and you are indeed a blessed one to have my esteemed Guru as your disciple’, concluded Sri Vijayeendra.



As soon as this conversation ended, Sri Sudheendra's joy knew no bounds and this also finds mention in the book cited earlier.

Sri Sudheendra had seen Venkatanātha, even as a child, whenever he had come to the Sri Mutt with his father. He had wondered at the brightness in the face of Venkatanatha, when, as a child he had often come there, clasping the hand of his father, Thimmanna Bhatta.

The significance of the brightness that the young face reflected then was cloaked in mystery and it came to be later known to Sri Sudheendra only through Sri Vijayeendra. It was for this reason that Sri Sudheendra had made all possible efforts to make Venkatanatha agree to taking up sanyasa (detailed exhaustively in Part I).

Sri Vijayeendra, only after knowing through his inner vision that his end was nearing, had told Sri Sudheendra at the material time the truth he had come to know through his spiritual powers.

Venkatanātha, the youngster, had come there from Madurai, when Sri Vijayeendra divulged the secret about him to Sri Sudheendra. He had, at that time, become proficient in all the sastras that he had learnt from his brother-in-law.

If Sri Vijayeendra had entered the Brindavan in 1595 A.D., all these occurrences could not have taken place. Also, knowledgeable people say that in the Raghavendraswami Mutt in Mantralaya, official

documents relating to the grant of title to Sri Vijayeendra in respect of certain properties, pertaining to the year 1613 A.D., still exist. In the circumstances, 1614 appears to be the correct year of Sri Vijayeendra Thirtha's attainment of mukti. Later, in 1623 only, the coronation of Sri Raghavendraswami takes place.

We may also analyse things now from an altogether different perspective. If Sri Raghavendra's birth is taken to be around 1581 and the year of his taking to sainthood as 1623, he should have been 42, when he took to sanyasa. But this seems improbable, since he was only 26 or 27 when he took to saintly way of life and based on that premise his birth should have been in 1595 or 1596 A.D. and so too, Sri Vijayeendra's entry into the Brindavan should have been 1614. And this only appears to be the true position.

We have in a way arrived at the approximate year of birth of Sri Raghavendra, but the controversy over the place of his birth still remains unresolved and this is covered in the next chapter.

### **SRI RAGHAVENDRA'S BIRTH PLACE**

There is little doubt about the fact that Sri Raghavendra's birth, education and his taking to sanyasa, had all taken place in Tamil Nadu. His tutelage at Madurai and Kumbakonam and his turning to saintly life at Tanjore, are accepted by all researchers.

It is said that Sri Raghavendra was born at Bhuvanagiri. But when the question arose as to whether

the Bhuvanagiri near Kanchipuram or the one near Chidambaram was the place of birth of the saint, it was accepted that the Bhuvanagiri near the latter place was the one that had seen the holy birth of Guru Raghavendra.

Those connected with the lineage of Sri Raghavendra, however, contend that he had only lived at Bhuvanagiri for a number of years, but that his birth had not taken place there.

Sri Venkatanatha had no doubt grown up at Bhuvanagiri, but his birth was at Kaveripoompattinam, according to them. They base their view point on the citation 'Pattanam namne' in Sri Raghavendra Vijaya and assert strongly that he was born in the agrahara (Brahmin area) of Kaveripoompattinam.

The memorial established in veneration of Sri Raghavendra at Bhuvanagiri and its effective functioning have already been mentioned about in part I.

It was opined by some that it was in the fitness of things that at the place where the saint had lived and had his early education, a monument, keeping that in view, had been dedicated to his memory and that a group of persons could therefore visit Kaveripoompattinam to gather all possible evidences and identify the actual place of birth of the saint beyond doubt. In tune with this thinking, efforts were initiated and I have also been invited to join the team engaged in this task (the description in first person here bears reference to Sri Nman Sathiyathan, the original author of the Tamil version of this work).

Sri Raghavendra has, without doubt, taken his birth in Tamil Nadu and it matters little whether it was at Bhuvanagiri or Kaveripoompattinam that he had taken his mundane avatar. However, it is the categorical opinion of a section of the researchers that the latter place could be the right choice in the exercise of pinpointing the place of birth of the saint.

Kaveripoompattinam is now known as Poompuhar and it is hoped that when the next edition is published, more information would be available on this subject.

What is important for us is that Sri Raghavendra is still alive in his Brindavan on the bank of the river Tungabhadra and seated inside the Brindavan, he is always gracing his devotees. His presence and his miraculous influence is manifest at all the Mrithika Brindavanas too.

We have known through some incidents narrated in part I that Sri Raghavendra will grace us instantly from wherever we may raise our distress call and pray for his blessings and succour. More such events are later covered in this volume also.

Is it Sri Raghavendra alone, who is living at Mantralaya? Oh, most certainly not. For, the manifestations of the Almighty Sri Narayana viz. Sri Rama, Sri Narasimha, Sri Krishna and the likes, as also Sri Veda Vyasa, are gracing devotees from there and making their divine presence felt at Mantralaya. We will be seeing this from the next chapter onwards.

Sri Raghavendra, when he was Venkatanatha, was inclined to comply with the entreaties of his master, Sri Sudheendra, (despite the latter's counselling to him to the length), and only when the Goddess of learning, Kalavani, appeared before him and explained matters, he came to a positive frame of mind about taking to asceticism. Closely following Goddess Saraswathi (Kalavani), Sri Rama, Sri Narasimha, Sri Krishna and Sri Vedavyasa too gave their darshan to Venkatanatha and blessed him; in consequence of which he could have the realization about his past birth.

That these Divine beings (who had appeared before Venkatanatha and made him to take up sainthood—keeping him alive to this day) are co-existing as a live force at the Moola Brindavana of Sri Raghavendra, will be known from an incident concerning Sri vijayadasa, covered next.

Vijayadasa was no ordinary person. We shall now see about his celebrity and the darshans he had at Mantralaya.

### **SRI RAGHAVENDRA GRACES VIJAYADASA**

It was Brigu Maharishi who was the cause for the advent of Lord Venkatachalapathi at Tirumala. Today, thousands of devotees are attracted towards the Lord of seven Hills and unfailingly they have his grace too.

Sri Vijayadasa, about whom we are going to see now, is an amsa of Brigu Maharishi (amsa implies a

portion of Divinity). He is also referred to as Madhvapati re-born.

Among Sri Purandaradasa's sons, Madhvapati became a distinguished one. Purandaradasa had composed four lakh and odd hymns, ugabhogas and suladis. But the target he had contemplated was five lakhs.

It was Purandaradasa's desire that the number falling short of his target should be made up by his son Madhvapati, through his compositions. It is the belief of Haridasas that Madhvapati took birth as Vijayadasa and completed the task.

Vijayadasa was born in 1687 at a place called Chikala Parvi (or Chikkalabari) near Manvi in Raichur District. He was Dasappa to his parents, Seenappa and Koosamma.

The family was very poor and therefore Dasappa could not be sent for studies. He did not have the opportunity to learn even the rudiments, till he was 16 or 18. As a result, Dasappa had to face lot of humiliation in society.

Dasappa attends the Upanayanam (some say marriage) of the son of Sri Raghavendra Rao, Tahsildar of Adoni Taluk. There, he is segregated from the assemblage and summoned to prepare sandalwood paste. Besides, he is also asked to do all kinds of odd jobs. He is then ridiculed as one leading a beastly life and turned out of the place without even being given anything to eat.

The incident brings about a change in him and makes him resolute and dogged. Dasappa, thereafter proceeds straight to Kasi and has his spiritual guidance and learning of sastras in the company of Byragis (ascetics). He returns home later and is married off.

He works as a revenue collecting staff for the next 16 years, leading normal worldly life. But all the while, his thoughts are hovering around Kasi and the holy place is so inviting to him that his heart is always pining for his being there.

Spurred by this yearning, he goes there again and indulges in further development of his spiritual knowledge.

While so, one night Sri Purandaradasa appears in Dasappa's dream and takes him to Vridhakasi, on the other side of the Ganges. At Vyasakasi, Sri Purandaradasa enables Dasappa to have darshan of Sri Vedavyasa and causes the Divine words 'Vijaya Vittala'- the holy tag of identity - to be written on his tongue, before vanishing.

With the blessings of the Guru and the grace of Sri Vedavyasa, Dasappa transforms as Vijayadasa and composes numerous hymns. He also visits various holy places and creates scores of songs in praise of the Almighty.

Afterwards, he returns to his place with glory. Those who had earlier despised him, start claiming blood relationship with him and extolling him to the skies.

Great ones like Gopaladasa, Mohanadasa and Jagannathadasa come under the powerful influence of Vijayadasa and later become indebted to him. Mohanadasa, suffering from an incurable disease, is saved from the jaws of death by Sri Vijayadasa. Jagannathadasa, who never had any respect for Haridasas (servants of God), suffers extreme pain on account of an intestinal disorder and Sri Vijayadasa causes not only Jagannathadasa's suffering to vanish (sparing him from certain extinction), but also transforms him as a Hari Dasa.

Vijayadasa, the amsa of Brigu Maharishi, once went to Tirupati. (In fact, it is said that there is no count of his visits to Kasi and Tirupati). While there, he was, on one occasion, sitting in the sanctum sanctorum and meditating worshipfully. The temple authorities, failing to notice his presence there, locked the door and left the place. And lo, the chariot of Lord Srinivasa, which was outside the temple, did not move an inch, despite tremendous efforts by all those present there to push it along. Suddenly, one of those in the gathering, went in a trance and swore that if Vijayadasa was brought there, the chariot would move. And it is said that it happened so, when the door was unlocked and Vijayadasa was conducted there.

Jagannathadasa, whose life was saved by Vijayadasa, was known by the name Srinivasachar. When he suffered excruciating pain in his stomach (as a consequence of his talking ill of the Hari Dasas), he went to Tirupati and Mantralaya and prayed for relief from the





driven to the point of ending his life by drowning himself in the Tungabhadra river. Lo, at that moment, he heard a Divine voice telling him, 'Go to Vijayadasa! Your disease will vanish'. Accordingly, he rushes to Vijayadasa and prostrates before him. Vijayadasa blesses him and directs him to go to Gopaladasa and there Srinivasachar consumes whatever was prescribed by the latter and gets cured of his ailment.

Later, in Tirupati, when Srinivasachar was in his death bed, Vijayadasa was instrumental in transferring 40 years of Gopaladasa's longevity, as a gift to him. Jagannathadasa spent those years in composing hymns and kirtanas in glory of the Almighty - doing full justice to the unexpected stroke of good fortune that he had, through the grace of Sri Vijayadasa. Merukriti and Harikathamruthasara are the popular ones among his compositions.

Vijayadasa's musical compositions too are well known and as ambrosial as the kirtanas of Purandaradasa.

Vijayadasa, who had performed many miracles like these, visits Mantralaya to have darshan of Sri Raghavendraswami.

He stands before the Brindavana of the Guru, forgetting his self. He reminisces at that time the grace that he had from Purandaradasa.

His heart melts at what Purandaradasa had revealed to him and done for him. He had written the Divine words 'Vijaya Vittala' on his tongue and blessed him to compose hymns on Hari Sarvothama, as also to

visit South India and have darshan of an illustrious saint on the banks of the Tungabhadra river, with whose grace he could continue what had been left behind by him (Purandaradasa).

Vijayadasa, strangely, could not see the Brindavan of Sri Raghavendraswami, but witnessed a powerful dazzle from there. He could, soon after, see Sri Ramachandramurthi, Sri Narasimha, Sri Krishnaparamatma and Sri Vedavyasa showering their blessings on Sri Raghavendra, from the four corners of the Brindavan.

Vijayadasa felt a chillness passing through his body. He became tongue-tied, the Divine radiance leaving him nonplussed. His exuberance knew no bounds and he was totally blinded by tears of joy.

Wiping his tears he again looks at the Brindavan, but does not have its vision. Sri Rama, Sri Narasimha, Sri Krishna and Sri Vedavyasa too were not visible, but instead, he sees an unusual brightness engulfing the four corners of the Brindavan and celestial beings standing there and blessing Sri Raghavendra sitting in a padmasana posture in deep meditation. And in ecstasy he shouts at that moment, "Guru Raghavendra, Guru Raghavendra!"

Through the grace of Sri Raghavendraswami, Vijayadasa had also darshan of all the great Acharyas of the Madhwa cult, in the Brindavan before him. And after some time, the rare spectacle disappeared from his vision and Sri Raghavendraswami's Brindavan alone was conspicuous there.

‘Gururaja, I came to have darshan of your Brindavana, but what type of extraordinary darshans I was blessed with! Aha, Aha!’ vented Vijayadasa and spontaneously started composing and rendering kirtanas in praise of God.

Sri Vijayadasa’s songs are only a continuation of Purandaradasa’s compositions. What had been left behind by the latter had been taken up and completed by Vijayadasa.

Just as Purandaradasa’s compositions are not available in entirety, but only in a small number, so too about one thousand hymns of Vijayadasa only have been retrieved.

The experience of Vijayadasa reveals not only the greatness of Mantralaya and its Divine influence, but also the reason for thousands of devotees thronging there daily. It also portrays the magnetic influence that Sri Raghavendra’s tapas spreads out from the Brindavan, in which he is a live force to this day.

Sri Vijayadasa has proved to the world that those with steadfast belief and unflagging devotion can have darshan of Sri Raghavendra sitting alive in his Brindavan, even to this day.

Without education in his early days, Vijayadasa was the object of ridicule and derision by others, but becomes an erudite person through the blessings of Purandaradasa (who had the grace of Sri Vyasaraaja); later, he acquires spiritual wisdom and mental vision through the blessings of the great saint of Mantralaya. If

Sri Vijayadasa's compositions are popular to this day, the reason for it is his unflinching devotion.

We learn from Sri Vijayadasa's life that we should not spare any efforts to inculcate true bhakti. As the Lord says in Gita, we should condition ourselves to the attainment of transcendental consciousness.

We have seen about Vijayadasa's life history and his compositions in scanning the foregoing. A doubt may arise as to how Purandaradasa who appeared in the dream of Vijayadasa, could have written Divine words on his tongue. The possibility of this is confirmed by the mysterious deed of Sri Raghavendra in another incident. Let us see that in the next chapter.

### **SRI RAGHAVENDRA'S GRACE TO NARASIMHA AVADHANI**

Sri Narasimha Avadhani was living at Akalkot near Sholapur.

He was a Brahmacharin (celibate). He remained uneducated, as he was slow in learning.

Just as Vijayadasa was treated as a laughing stock when he was Dasappa, Avadhani too was called a stupid and mocked at by those living around him.

One day, a well-wisher, pitying his condition, called him aside and spoke to him words of encouragement.

'Appa, you don't worry about anything. Even those who have been less fortunate than you, have been cured of their maladies and blessed with progress in their lives,

by the grace of Guru Raghavendra. Your only drawback is that you have not been able to equip yourself with the learning necessary for your age. I would advise you to go to Mantralaya and worship Sri Raghavendra. He will definitely show you the way and solve your problems.'

'I do not know any slokas on Sri Raghavendra swami. How can I worship him?' queries Narasimha Avadhani, with all eagerness.

'All that is not really necessary. If you merely chant, "Om Sri Raghavendraya Namaha" a number of times daily with devotion, that would suffice'.

'Most certainly I shall do that', said Avadhani with great enthusiasm.

Accordingly, he went to Mantralaya and worshipped Sri Raghavendra, uttering 'Om Sri Raghavendraya Namaha' twelve lakh times.

One night, Sri Raghavendra appeared in his dream and wrote the holy letter 'Sri' on his tongue, just as Purandaradasa had written the divine words 'Vijaya Vittala' on the tongue of Sri Vijayadasa. In both the instances, the occurrences were only in the dream of the devotees.

While from the time of the rare blessing, Sri Vijayadasa started composing and rendering hymns spontaneously, the unlettered and inane Narasimha Avadhani, when graced by the Guru, acquired instantly the power of explaining fluently the substance of Madhwa philosophy as embodied in the writings of the great ones, stunning everyone who heard his oration.

Here, Mahakavi Kalidasa can be cited as an example. His poetic writings, as is known well, are still acclaimed all over and are ever shining. But, was Kalidasa an erudite scholar before? Was it not because the Goddess blessed him by writing divine words on his tongue that he became renowned? Therefore, Purandaradasa's inscription of holy words on the tongue of Sri Vijayadasa and Sri Raghavendraswami likewise gracing Sri Narasimha Avadhani, need not be considered as having been in the realms of imagination, but given due credence as an occurrence in reality.

Narasimha Avadhani became distinguished not only for his discourses on Madhwa philosophy but also for being instrumental in Vidya Devi (the Goddess of learning) gracing many with knowledge and learning. He imparted vedic knowledge to all those who came to him for learning, making them well-versed in the subject. Simultaneously, he was also expounding the greatness of Sri Raghavendra and propagating his mystic deeds.

Thus, Sri Raghavendra has been providing us answers at every stage, by making his appearance felt in occurrences that provide the clue to the doubts lingering in our minds. We would be seeing some other incidents like these, scattered in this writing here and there.

While Sri Raghavendra's earlier births have been covered here briefly as in Part I, greater attention has been given only to his life story as Sri Raghavendra. At the same time, I have also been seized by the desire to present at least a bird's eye-view of Sri Madhwacharya

who has propounded the Madhwa cult, since Sri Raghavendra has taken his birth in a lineage following the Madhwa ideology. There were suggestions in person, as also through letters, regarding this and since many are eager to know at least a few things about Sri Madhwacharya, the next chapter is devoted to a brief presentation of his mystic deeds and the Madhwa philosophy espoused by him. Quite fittingly, the chapter is titled as, "Sri Raghavendra's birth in the Madhwa sect".

Apart from this, a good deal can also be written on the spiritual powers of many of those connected with Sri Raghavendra in his earlier births. Some of them will find place in Part III, since in this writing we are to see more about Sri Raghavendra only.

Presently, in the next chapter, we will get absorbed in the supernatural deeds of Sri Madhwacharya and from the chapter following the next one, to the end of this book, we will be witnessing various spine-chilling and mysterious happenings ascribable to the powers of Sri Raghavendraswami that will really enthrall us and gladden our hearts. In the process, let us also get his blessings to lead a wholesome life.

## **SRI RAGHAVENDRA'S BIRTH IN THE MADHWA SECT**

I pray that my writings and their substance be blessed by Sri Madhwa Thirtha, his graceful face and mental worship of him proliferating them, just like the



ocean that is the king of all the rivers, rises at the sight of the moon'.

(Sri Raghavendra Vijayam - ch.1/3)

It is proverbial that a good crop can be spotted, even as it sprouts. In other words, even in the early stages of growth, it can easily be assessed whether the crop will be of good yield or otherwise.

For the seed to sprout well, the sowing must be in arable land, followed by good manuring and adequate and timely irrigation. Sunlight and shade must also be available in the right proportion. When growing, the crop should be protected from being trod on or grazed by the cattle. Proper manuring in right quantity should be applied at the appropriate time. It is only when all these processes are completed, the cultivation can be successful and well-yielding.

Sri Raghavendraswami's birth was in a distinguished lineage and his gothra (the origin of the lineage) a sacred one. The place of his birth, the place where he had grown up, the type of spiritual tutelage that he had, as also the place of his Brindavana pravesh are truly unmatched in their excellence. His spiritual preceptors and his disciples in every one of his births were outstanding personages. He was a follower of the Madhwa school of religious thought that professes the concept 'Hari Sarvothama, Vayu Jeevothama' or that Hari is supreme and Vayu is the Lord of the Jivas (i.e., souls/senses). Sri Madhwa, who had theorised this philosophical concept (now recognised as the Madhwa school of religious thought), was spiritually a powerful



personality. He was the fountain-head and Acharya of all the mutts following this precept.

We have seen about the celebrity of Sri Raghavendraswami's lineage and other related matters in Part I. Presently, we will be absorbed in a brief coverage about Sri Madhwacharya and from the next chapter we will be immersed in the mystiques of Sri Raghavendraswami.

The mysterious deeds of Sri Raghavendra are attributable to the religious principles that he strictly followed - viz. those enunciated by no less a person than Sri Madhwacharya. It is therefore in the fitness of things that we should know a few things about Sri Madhwacharya, the patriarch of those tenets.

Pajaka is a place near Udipi, known for its temple for Sri Durga devi that exists on a small, beautiful hillock, known as Vimanagiri. Sri Parasurama has installed the Durga devi idol there. At a bigger mound, opposite to it, is the temple for Sri Parasurama. The place abounds in holy tanks like the Dhanus, the Sara, the Bana, the Gada and the Parasu.

An orthodox Brahmin by name Narayana Bhatta (also known as Madhyageha Bhatta) was making his living in Pajaka by rendering religious discourses. He was strict in the observance of the daily rituals prescribed in the sastras. Yet, he had the misfortune of losing both the offspring born to him.

'Oh God, what a trial is this?' vented Madhyageha Bhatta, praying for progeny at the Udipi Anantheswara

temple and observing strict penance there - consuming only the milk offered at the temple. He continued observing such austerity and worship for twelve long years, without any break.

At the same temple, one Achyutapreksha (also called Achyutapragnya), an orthodox acharya, was also worshipping the deity there. While so, a devotee there went in a trance once, and through his medium Lord Anjantheswara graced Achyutapreksha with the proclamation, 'You will soon have as your disciple the son of Vayu (the wind God) to establish the truth, "Hari Sarvothama, Vayu Jeevothama".'

Be that so, it was then that Madhyageha Bhatta too was blessed with a son, who reflected great intelligence and wisdom even at birth and was endowed with all the 32 good attributes. The child was named Vasudeva and was brought up with strict discipline and orthodoxy.

But Vasudeva was very prankish in his childhood. Once, when he had gone with his parents to a festival, he skived off, and hanging by the tail of a cow, had an adventurous trip through thickly vegetated, mountainous and marshy terrains, before returning to the anxious parents—in the same odd-looking manner.

On another occasion, when a creditor demanded of Vasudeva's father the return of the money he had lent him, Vasudeva took some tamarind seeds in his hands and gave them to him saying, 'Please have this money in settlement of the dues', and lo, the seeds instantaneously turned into silver and gold coins.

Vasudeva was once terribly hungry, when his mother was not at home. To beat his hunger, Vasudeva ate the entire quantity of soaked horsegram kept in the house as cattle-feed. While the parents became anxious whether the child could endure the resultant ill-effects, Vasudeva suffered no uneasiness and was as playful as ever, having digested whatever he had consumed!

Another time, Vasudeva ran away to Udipi Anantheswara temple, without the knowledge of his parents. The anxious parents, after futile search at various places, finally located him at Udipi and accosted him, 'How have you come alone?'. Vasudeva coolly replied to them, 'How could I have come alone? I would be left alone, only if there is any place where God is not present,' leaving the parents dumbfounded. On yet another occasion, when he was playing on the hillock, Vasudeva's mother called him and lo, in an instant he was in front of the house, revealing his supernatural powers. Vasudeva's small footprints can be seen on that mound, even today.

Like these, the parents had experienced several mystiques and were as perplexed about them as the others. At the same time, they also felt some uneasiness about the incongruity between his deeds and his age.

True to their fears, one day Vasudeva told his parents, "I am going to take to sanyasa", leaving them in state of shock. What the parents feared should not be taking place, was indeed heard by them as a bolt from the blue, through their own son's pronouncement.

‘Appa Vasudeva! Is it for this we have begotten you, through penance? How on earth did you get the idea of turning to asceticism, leaving us in the lurch? Who will support us in our old age?’ cried the parents in vain, for the boy was unmoved by their pleas. He then tore to pieces the clothes he had on him and just tying a loincloth on his person, stood before his parents like a recluse.

‘Vasudeva, Vasudeva, we can’t see you in this state. We are yearning to get you married at the appropriate age, to be able to shower our love and affection on our grandchild. Please don’t set at nought all those longings that we are always cherishing in our heart. We prostrate before you and make this earnest submission, Vasudeva’. So sobbing, the parents, who could not control their grief, slowly slumped before him.

‘Aha, Aha, I must really be grateful to you for permitting me to take to asceticism, thanks a lot,’ burst out the lad.

‘Vasudeva, what are you telling?’

‘Only youngsters can fall at the feet of elders and seek their blessings. But if elders should fall at the feet of a youngster, he could only be a monk.’

‘Vasudeva, don’t torment us’.

‘Alright, I shall not turn to sainthood now.’

‘Oh, Lord Anantheswara, you are truly merciful.’

‘It implies you will have another son.’

‘What are you telling? You yourself are our son....’.

‘Listen carefully to what I tell. Till a brother is born to me, I shall not take to sanyasa. To support you in your old age, my younger brother will be there. Are you agreeable to this? If not, you cannot see me alive,’ said Vasudeva, leaving the parents no other alternative but to yield.

Madhyageha Bhatta soon had another son.

Later, as promised to Vasudeva, he was taken to Anantheswara temple. Achyuthapreksha, who appeared to be only waiting for him, became overjoyed on seeing Vasudeva and realising that he was the lad the Divine Voice that had graced him had pointed to, granted sanyasa to him and initiated him into asceticism, with the holy name ‘Poornapragnya’.

Poornapragnya had the capacity to grasp things easily and if told once he could comprehend even the most difficult lessons and retain them in his mind. He had the wisdom of explaining concepts in an altogether different perspective, even to his own guru. Poornapragnya, had later come to be known by different names such as Ananda Thirtha, Madhwa, Anumana Thirtha, Poornabodha, Suga Thirtha, etc. And each of these honorifics had behind it separate explanatory reasons. We can delve into them later, in a separate writing on Sri Madhwacharya.

Soon after the holy initiation, Ananda Thirtha embarked on a missionary tour to places. He won over all those who contested against him in religious debates and established firmly the doctrine, ‘Hari Sarvothama, Jeyo Jeevothama’.

Sri Madhwa was well-built and robust. He was an expert in wrestling. At a place called Khalasa near Chickmagalur, Sri Madhwa could effortlessly move aside big boulders with just one hand, to create an artificial barrage against flood waters - a thing which could not earlier be accomplished by all the inhabitants around, despite best efforts. A boulder called 'Bheemana Bande' is still in existence there.

Sri Madhwa's digestive capacity was extraordinary. When it was put to test, just as he had consumed a large quantity of horsegram when he was a child, he ate more than two hundred plantains, that too in one take (after a full meal) to prove the strength of his Jataragni (the gastric juice).

He goes to Badrikashram and meets Sri Vedavyasa. The Gita Bhashya written by him is submitted there. He establishes that there is nothing on par with the Vaishnavaita philosophy, just as there is no place like Badri to shed off one's sins or a river as holy as the Ganges, not to speak of the unparalleled greatness of Vishnu.

When a disciple once desired that he should have his holy bath at Kasi in the Ganges, the acharya caused the waters of that sacred river to gush out right before him at that spot, now popularly known as 'Madhwa Sarovar'.

Sri Madhwacharya goes to Badri for a second time and on the way a king asks him to cause the proverbial seed to sprout by the utterance of Vedic mantras, and lo, he does it successfully to prove the efficacy of the





Sri Madhwacharya has authored 37 religious works. All his writings are considered as Sarva Moola Grantha or the sourcebook for everything.

While standing on the beach once, he guided to safety a vessel tossing in the high seas, waving his ochre robe from the shore. The owner of the vessel, in gratitude, offered diamonds and other valuables to him, but the acharya refused to take them and obtained only two blocks of gopi chandana (hardened clay) that were being carried in the boat, to keep it on an even keel.

Sri Madhwacharya took one of those blocks to Udipi, uttering the 'Dwadasa stotra'. The idol of Sri Krishna obtained from that block (when broken), was installed and consecrated at Udipi, by the acharya. For performing puja to this deity, he established eight mutts there. The pontiffs of those mutts are performing the pujas and other rituals to this day, in biennial turns.

While the acharya was at Badri, Sri Vedavyasa once took the sands of Badrikashram in his fist and closed his fingers tightly. The grains hardened and formed into icons. These miniature icons are worshipped even to this day and are known by the name 'Vyasamushti'. And one of those is with the Sri Mutt at Mantralaya and everyday it is kept with the other idols, in the puja of the Mutt.

It would be of interest to know why Sri Madhwacharya had been so persevering, powerful and wise. The reason behind it is that he is an avatar of Vayu Deva.



Yes, Vayu Deva has taken three avatars -as Hanuma, Bhima and Madhwa.

It was Vayu Deva who had comforted Sanku Karna (after the latter had earned a curse) saying, 'Don't be upset Sanku Karna; it is only to establish Dharma in the terrestrial world and for spreading Divine worship that you have been made to suffer this curse'. True to that pronouncement, Sanku Karna had taken birth as Prahlada, Sri Vyasaraaja and Sri Raghavendra at different points of time and these have already been touched upon earlier.

Sri Vayu Deva, in his avatar as Hanuman did service to Sri Rama, while in his birth as Bhima, he did seva to Sri Krishna and following it, in his mundane appearance as Sri Madhwa, he has served Sri Vedavyasa.

Like Bhima, Sri Madhwa too had the strength to eat and digest anything. He also had the power to accomplish things with an ease and stubbornness that could match those of Hanuman. And the list of similarities is really endless.

Sri Trivikrama Panditacharya has composed the Vayu Stuti on Sri Vayu Deva, who had taken avatars as Hanuma, Bhima and Madhwa. Sri Madhwacharya has composed Sri Narasimha Nakha Stuti to be chanted before and after the Vayu Stuti, commonly referred to as the Hari Vayu Stuti. Trivikrama Panditacharya's son was known by the name Narayana Panditacharya. He has written the life story of Sri Madhwa, under the title 'Sumadhva Vijaya'. He was a contemporary of Sri

Madhwacharya and had remained with him, while writing his life story. It is for the same reason that 'Sri Raghavendra Vijaya', composed by Mahakavi Sri Narayanachar, also continues to be as famed as 'Sri Sumadhva Vijaya'.

Just as 'Sri Raghavendra Vijaya' is the sourcebook for the life history of Sri Raghavendra, 'Sumadhva Vijaya' fulfils the same purpose, chronicling the life history of Sri Madhwacharya. Sumadhva Vijaya has 16 chapters, as already mentioned earlier.

Sri Madhwacharya, who had thus distinguished himself, in ever so many ways during his life time, proposed to go to Badri in the year Pingala, on Uttarayana Maha Suddha Navami. That day, he was teaching 'Aitreya Bhashya' to his pupils in the Anantheswara temple. The celestial beings watching it, were so thrilled by those lessons that they caused a rain of flowers to fall on him from the Heaven. As the quantum of flowers kept on increasing, Sri Madhwacharya was, ere long, drowned in the ocean of flowers around him.

As even after a considerable lapse of time Sri Madhwacharya did not emerge out of the heap of flowers, his disciples removed the flowers to see him, and lo, he was not to be seen there!

But, where did he go and how?

In truth, he is still in Badri and is with Vedavyasa.

Even as a child, did he not appear before his house from the hillock he was at, the moment his mother called

him? In the same way he has disappeared from the heap of flowers to reach Badrikashram.

The day Sri Madhwa entered the Badrikashram is commemorated every year by celebrating it as 'Madhwa Navami'. While Sri Raghavendra entered the Brindavan, Sri Madhwacharya entered Badri. It is not the present day Badrinath that is referred to here, as Badri. Sri Madhwacharya, it is believed, is living in the Badri that is far higher in altitude than the Badrinath.

The reason for Sri Raghavendraswami possessing such supernatural powers and being still alive, is the grace of Sri Madhwacharya and his strict adherence to the religious precepts and practices propounded by that great acharya. And 'Hari Sarvothama, Vayu Jeevothama' is the strong belief on which Sri Raghavendra had based his living upon.

Sri Madhwacharya's precept of 'Dwaita Siddhanta' is lofty, but simple. Sri Raghavendra had been following it throughout. The explanations about its philosophical content will be extensively covered in my proposed writing on Sri Madhwacharya.

Here, I am giving only the gist of 'Dwaita Siddhanta' (or Dwaita Philosophy):

1) Hari Sarvothama, Vayu Jeevothama;

2) The World is real;

3) Paramatma (the Supreme spirit), Jiva (the soul) and the non-sentient object (the jada) are different from each other, their distinction being five in number, viz:

- i) the difference between Paramatma and Jivatma;
- ii) the dissimilarity between Paramatma and the non-sentient object;
- iii) the disparity between Jivatma and the inanimate thing;
- iv) the contrast among the Jivas;
- v) the incongruity between the various lifeless entities.

(This short indication will suffice in this writing, because we have to see about the mysterious deeds of Sri Raghavendraswami in a detailed manner from the next chapter).

Sri Raghavendra's grace and his supernatural deeds will undoubtedly inculcate bhakti in us, showing us the right path and causing immense good to us.

I pray that such indulgence in knowing about the greatness of Sri Raghavendra and his spiritual powers, should cause effacement of all obstacles and lead us all to happiness. With this prayer, I take you to the next chapter to enthrall you in the wondrous deeds of Sri Raghavendraswami.



**BRINDARANYA SHOWN  
BY VENKATESA**

Sri Narayana, the Supreme Being, the Creator and Protector of all the worlds, has made His appearance in Kaliyuga as Lord Venkataramana, at Tirumala, to grace His devotees.

Sri Venkatesa Suprabhatham describes the Lord as, 'Sri Venkata Nayaka! Sri Padmanabha! Purushothama! Vasudeva! Vaikunta vasa! Madhava! Janardhana! Chakrapani!' etc. He is glorified as one with Goddess Lakshmi in his bosom and as a Giver of all benefits like the Kamadhenu, to those surrendering themselves to Him. In His mercy, He is like an ocean of nectar! He is the Supreme Divine Being worshipped by all the celestials. His beautiful lotus-like feet have been worshipped by the likes of Adishesha and Garuda. And so are various other attributes of the Lord eulogised in the Venkatesa Suprabhatam.

Sri Venkataramana, as mentioned in the above stotra, is matchless in gracing devotees with the boons they seek of Him. It is said that if one knocks at His doors praying, 'Appa, Govinda! Venkatanatha', He will shower His mercy instantaneously, smashing the door and making His appearance before the devotee. But what is required is intense bhakti from the depth of one's heart, while making any submission to Him. In other words, it should reflect unshakeable faith and confidence in Him.

And He has never let down devotees possessing such unwavering bhakti and belief in Him. Thimmanna Bhatta and Gopikamba had, as a result of their steadfast mind, intense devotion and prayer to Him, been blessed by Him with an offspring - Sri Raghavendraswami - caused by Him to be born as a Divine messenger. Numerous instances like this can be cited to drive home the truth that earnest devotion and prayer to Him will never go in vain.



Once, a king by name Sumathi, was seeking the grace of Lord Venkatesa with deep devotion and tearful eyes. He was thrilled by the magnificence of the Divine form before him that his heart craved for having darshan of Lord Srinivasa in yet another resplendence. Sumathi therefore stood there praying to the Lord of the Seven Hills for that blessing as well.

‘Oh Lord, your form is one of dazzling brilliance. Your supernatural deeds and the counselling proffered by you in the Krishna avatar are spine-chilling. Your Gitopadesa to Arjuna that you had tendered as his charioteer in the Kurukshetra war, encompasses everything and is relevant for all times, its purpose having been to put an end to adharma and establish morality. Oh Lord, please do grace me as you had blessed Partha, by revealing the splendid manifestation in which you had appeared before him’.

‘Oh king! Your yearning will be fulfilled; I am making my appearance in the form that you are praying for at the holy place of Brindaranya that is known for its Kairavini thirtha. You can have my darshan there to your heart’s content,’ echoed the incorporeal voice of the Lord.

King Sumathi then rushes to Brindaranya and in the meanwhile let us briefly explore the greatness of that place.

Brindaranya is a holy place where the seven great sages, Brigu, Marichi, Athri, Markandeya, Saptha Roma, Jali and Sumathi have made their advent. (The Sumathi mentioned amongst the sages is not king Sumathi cited S.R.II-10 ,



earlier. While the former was a rishi, the other was a ruler).

It is as sacred as Tirupati extolled by saints like Peyazhwar, Thirumazhisai Azhwar and Thirumangai Azhwar. It has a status amongst the 108 holy Vaishnavaites places and is known for mystic happenings.

The sacred place that Brindaranya is, the five deities, Sri Venkatakrishna, Sri Rama, Sri Ranganatha, Sri Gajendra Varada and Sri Yoga Narasimha are even today gracing devotees there.

At the holy place of such great repute, a mrithika Brindavan of Sri Raghavendraswami has also been consecrated through his mysterious powers. Presently, it has become renowned for the extraordinary happenings taking place there - all attributable to the supernatural influence of the mrithika Brindavan.

Before knowing about the episode concerning the installation of the mrithika Brindavan of Sri Raghavendraswami there, we should also learn how Sri Venkatakrishna made his advent at the holy place of Brindaranya.

It is a well-known fact that Sri Vedavyasa is the cause for Ithihasa Puranas spreading and being transmitted even today. Whatever religious writings appear today, are only based on what Sri Vedavyasa had propagated.

Sri Vedavyasa had a disciple by name Athreya. He had great bhakti towards Lord Krishna and would always be worshipping him. Vedavyasa thought that

Brindaranya would be the proper place for his disciple to meditate and do penance.

Accordingly, Vedavyasa sent Athreyamuni to Brindaranya kshetra. He also gave his disciple a beautiful idol of Sri Krishna that the latter was holding dear to his heart. And when rishi Athreya reached Brindaranya with the icon of Sri Krishna, he met sage Sumathi there. It needs to be mentioned again that the Sumathi who had prayed to Lord Venkataramana to reveal His manifestation as presented before Arjuna and had been graced by the Almighty, was Sumathi, the king. In the sequence of events he is yet to visit Brindaranya and the Sumathi whom sage Athreya meets is the ascetic and not the ruler.

Sumathi, the sage, becomes ecstatic on seeing the idol of Krishna brought by Athreya. He was delighted by the presentation of the Lord as holding the conch-shell in one hand and lotus in the other, signifying the conferment of Divine blessing.

Later, on an auspicious day, both the sages installed the idol there. They also consecrated the other related graven images at the place - Sri Rukmini, to the right of Lord Krishna and to her right Baladeva, Sri Sathyaki to the left of the Lord and to her left Pradhyumna and Aniruddha.

After worshipping Sri Krishna in this form, sages Athreya and Sumathi reached the Heaven. And following them, several others too worshipped that idol and were graced.

It was this Krishna that Sri Venkatesa wanted Sumathi, the king, to have darshan of and worship and

the Lord, in an ethereal voice, had transmitted that message to him. King Sumathi comes running there and on seeing the grandeur of Lord Krishna, the charioteer to Partha, he forgets himself and the surroundings, drowned in devotion at its peak. As Lord Srinivasa Himself had shown the way to have this extraordinary darshan of Lord Krishna, the devotee is ecstatic about it and forgets everything else around him, immersed in thoughts about the unique blessing that he had from the Lord.

“Aha! The Krishna shown by Lord Venkatesa, is Venkatakrishna” rejoiced king Sumathi from the depth of his heart and started chanting ‘Venkatakrishna, Venkatakrishna’, with utmost bhakti.

It is for this significance that the Krishna at Brindaranya is known by the holy name Venkatakrishna.

Brindam means Tulsi (Basil) and Aranyam signifies forest or a place of greenery. And Tulsi is Lord Vishnu's favourite plant. Therefore, the advent of Venkatakrishna at a place where there is profuse growth of Tulsi is indeed symbolic. Also, that Sri Raghavendraswami's mrithika Brindavana has come up at such a place of holy significance, is specially noteworthy.

Brindaranya and Brindavana connote the same importance. Tulsi archana is something very special to Sri Raghavendra, who enjoyed the grace of Sri Krishna and to whose song the Lord had danced before the Brindavana pravesha of his devotee.

It is a rare blessing to have darshan of both Sri Venkatakrishna and Sri Raghavendra at Brindaranya. Incidentally, one's curiosity may be aroused as to where

the Brindavana is that has the Kairavini thirtha (or tank) around.

Yes, it is in Chennai only! Apart from knowing about the Brindaranya in Chennai, we are also to see in the next chapter, the miraculous deed of Sri Raghavendra there, that will leave us baffled.



## SRI RAGHAVENDRA'S MIRACLE IN BRINDARANYA!

Kairavini is a Sanskrit term. In Tamil it is known as 'Allikkeni' (Lotus tank). With the addition of a dignified connotation, it has become 'Tiruvallikkeni'. The present day 'Tiruvallikkeni' is the 'Brindaranya' of the past.

Venkatakrishna had graced Partha (or Arjuna), by being a charioteer and driving his chariot. It is on account of this significance that the Lord has made his advent as Parthasarathi!

Some time in 1945-46, one Raja Venkatraghavendrachar came there to have darshan of Lord Parthasarathi and of his consort, the Divine mother Sri Vedavalli. He was a person proficient in all sastras and arts and was strict in observing the rituals in an orthodox manner. His face was always reflective of his spiritual wisdom and bhakti.

It was on account of these credentials that he was privileged to serve as the Diwan in the religious empire of Sri Suyamindra Thirtha, the head of the Moola Brindavana at Mantralaya, in the years 1945-46.



Sri Venkatraghavendrachar had the opportunity of having darshan of Lord Parthasarathi at that time, while on an official errand in Chennai. Enamoured by the sanctity of the place, he reflected within himself how nice it would be to have a Brindavan for Sri Raghavendraswami there. And his mental picture of it caused a bestirring in him, leaving him greatly excited.

“Guru Raghavendra, after having darshan of the Lord, this thought has flashed in me like a lightning. I have the faith that you will fulfil this also, because you too must be having the same design and therefore you must have caused this reflection to occur in my mind”, pondered Sri Venkatraghavendrachar and came out of the Parthasarathiswami temple through the back door (i.e. through the opening in the present day Thulasinga Perumal koil street).

Chanting mantras, the devotee, while entering the road, just lifted his head and lo, yet another perplexity was awaiting him there.

Yes! He could see a Madhwa saint standing there, a little distance ahead of him. Even as Venkatraghavendra char was wondering how he could have made a sudden appearance there, as he was not to be seen in the temple earlier, the saintly person started walking slowly.

And when Raja Venkatraghavendrachar was engrossed in the thought whether he should follow him, the Madhwa sanyasi gestured to him to follow him and Raghavendrachar instinctively complied with it.

The monk walked some distance and after passing five or six dwellings, stood in front of a house for a little



while. As Venkatraghavendrachar neared him, the ascetic went inside the house and stood transfixed for some time at a particular spot.

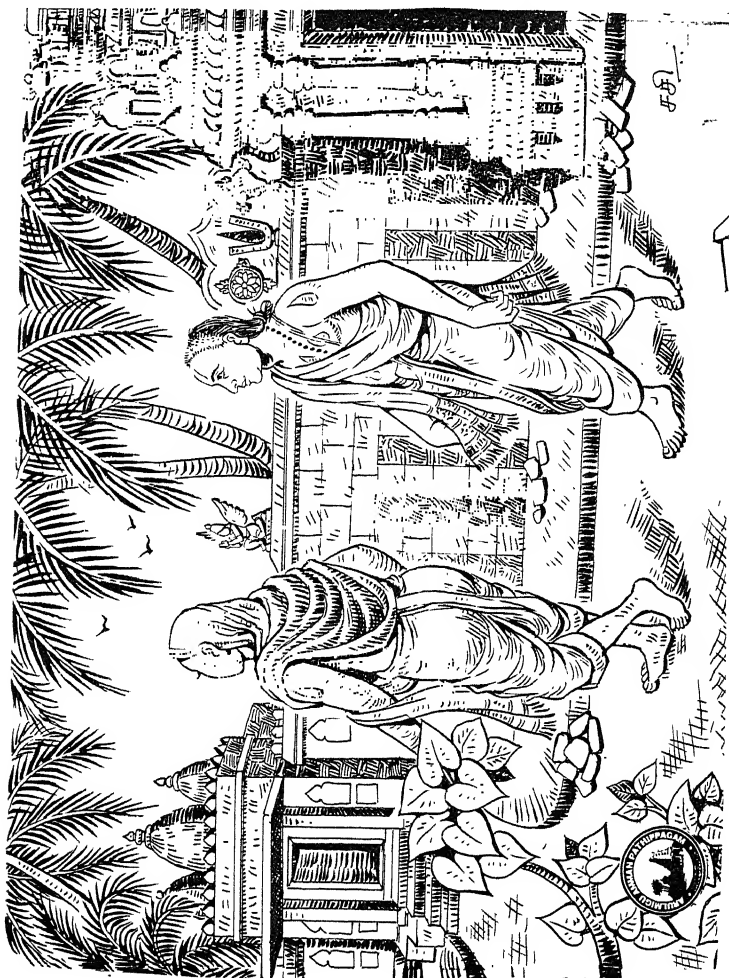
The Diwan, without batting an eye-lid and his look fixed on the sanyasi, moved slowly towards him. But the holy person was still motionless at that place and before he could be reached, disappeared from sight rather mysteriously like the flash of a lightning. Raghavendrachar, who saw these happenings right before his eyes, was left in a state of bewildered perplexity.

The incident made him start thinking that there was a strange correlation between what had earlier been passing through his mind and the queer occurrence closely following it.

Later, after completion of his work, the Diwan returned to Mantralaya and recounted to Sri Suyamindra Thirtha with great awe and veneration, all that had taken place in Tiruvallikkeni. The pontiff who heard it, also believed strongly that there was a hidden significance to the occurrence.

It was perhaps the desire of Sri Raghavendra that a mrithika Brindavana of his should come up at Brindaranya kshetra. The strange experience of the Diwan also points to the same. But when he will get it fulfilled was something beyond the realm of human comprehension.

Sri Suyamindra started thinking on different lines and pondered over the happenings of the past. In the 17th century Sri Raghavendra had entrusted the



construction of his own Brindavana to Diwan Venkanna under his personal guidance. But when the stones were brought for the purpose, he had told the Diwan that they were not the ones he had wanted and had instead suggested another one he had identified, to be brought for the erection of his Brindavana. With the stones brought first, he however caused the construction of a Brindavana and instructed its being kept vacant. He then entered his own Brindavana constructed near the vacant one, not long after. Later, in the 18th century, he caused Sri Vadindra Thirtha to enter the vacant Brindavana, next to his.

‘All these are your mysterious deeds Guru Raghavendra and in Thiruvallikkeni too a Brindavan of yours will definitely get installed. But when it will be and by whom it will get accomplished, are known to you only,’ reflected Sri Suyamindra Thirtha.

The place in Tiruvallikkeni where the saintly person stood (before disappearing), was earlier housing a girls’ school. Subsequently, it was converted into a marriage hall and later, after about 27 or 28 years a mrithika Brindavana of Sri Raghavendraswami made its majestic appearance there, in the year 1973. Its consecration in the sastraic way was done in a grand style on 21.6.1973, amidst devout cries of the bhaktas, who had assembled there in large numbers. Sri Sujayeendra Thirtha, the 52nd occupant of the seat of the Hamsa Namaka Paramatma line of religious succession - 37th from Madhwacharya and 21st from Sri Raghavendra Thirtha - performed the holy installation ceremony in Pramodisa year, on Jyeshtha, Bahula Panchami, Guru Vara (Thursday), in Rishaba lagna.

But it may be asked as to what is strange about this incident. After all what had been envisioned in 1945-46 by Raja Venkatraghavendrachar had turned into a reality in 1973 by the grace of Sri Raghavendra, is the cursory impression one will get from the sequence of events under scrutiny. Apart from this, what else is connoted in these happenings?

Yes, there is indeed a hidden significance in these occurrences. For, the pontiff who consecrated the installation of the mrithika Brindavana - Sri Sujayeendra Thirtha - and Sri Raja Venkatraghavendrachar, who had come as a Diwan to Brindaranya, are one and the same person and that is the mysterious happening behind these events.

It was after Sri Suyamindra Thirtha had entered the Brindavan, Sri Raja Venkatraghavendrachar who was a Diwan under him, became the Head of the Mutt with the holy name, Sri Sujayeendra Thirtha. And is it not a mysterious occurrence - attributable to the powers of Sri Raghavendraswami - that the one who was a Diwan earlier be consecrating as a pontiff, the installation of a Brindavan at the spot where the madhwa ascetic had stood, that too after a time span of nearly 28 years! And is not this incident bearing a similarity to the one relating to Thomas Munroe, seen in part I?

An ordinary Settlement Officer that he was, Munroe had gone to Mantralaya to make an on - the - spot study of the position relating to the lands in possession of Sri Raghavendra (in connection with their restitution to the government) and had the grace of the darshan of Sri Raghavendraswami in person, before him. After this

strange experience, Munroe sends his recommendation to the governor at Madras to rescind the order relating to the restoration of those lands to the government. But what follows is that Munroe himself gets elevation in his official status and becomes 'Sir Thomas Munroe' and in his new capacity as the Governor of Madras Presidency, gives his assent to the recommendation that he himself had submitted earlier as a Settlement Officer - undoubtedly ascribable to the mysterious powers of Sri Raghavendraswami. We have seen all this in a detailed manner in part I.

If we steadfastly believe in Sri Raghavendra and worship him, he will know our desires and fulfil them at the appropriate time. While some may materialise immediately, others will bear fruit later. If our heart's desire is left to him, the responsibility for its fulfilment shifts to him. He knows whom to grace and when to confer such benefit. One should not feel disappointed that there is no immediate result, as he knows when to grace and to whom he should extend his mercy. Sri Sujayeendra Thirtha could have done the installation in Tiruvallikkeni, immediately after taking charge as the head of the Sri Mutt. But it was only after 10 years that Sri Raghavendra had graced him that honour.

Likewise, Sri Raghavendra will get accomplished whatever he wants. For the installation of his Brindavana at Tiruvallikkeni he secured the place through a Diwan, just as he had obtained Mantralaya village from Nawab Siddi Masood Khan through Diwan Venkanna.

In the tri-centenary year of his aradhana, Sri Raghavendra, in another incident, had appeared in the dream of a devotee and directed him to hand over to Sri Sujayeendra Thirtha the exact quantum of gold that had fallen short of requirements for making the gold adornment for the Brindavan and thus caused the aradhana celebrations to be performed in a grand style.

Sri Sujayeendra Thirtha, who had thus enjoyed bountiful grace of Sri Raghavendraswami, entered the Brindavan in 1986, at Mantralaya. His own deeds, as also Sri Raghavendraswami's wondrous actions through him, are numerous.

Those going to Mantralaya can have darshan of Sri Sujayeendra Thirtha's Brindavan also and get blessed.

His aradhana, though celebrated in great splendour at various places, is specially significant in its grandeur at Tiruvallikkeni, known otherwise as Brindaranya.

Sri Raghavendra, has in fact graced the establishment of his Brindavana at Tiruvallikkeni, through Sujayeendra Thirtha only.

“Devarendare Tirupati Thimmappanu

Gurugalendare Mantralaya Raghappanu,”

is a common rendering. In translation, it means that any reference to the Almighty connotes Sri Venkateswara at Tirupati and likewise, Guru would imply the Lord of Mantralaya, Sri Raghavendraswami.

As in Brindaranya, at a place called Nanjangud too, the miracle performed by Sri Raghavendraswami is wondrous.

If Sri Sujayeendra was the cause here, it was Sugnyanendra Thirtha who was instrumental in a strange happening that took place at Nanjangud. Among the various places of worship, Nanjangud is unique in one way. While at all places, including Mantralaya, there is Brindavana for Sri Raghavendraswami, in Nanjangud there has been a consecration of his idol and not of a Brindavana.

For the installation of that idol in a short time-in the matter of a few days-the mysterious deeds performed by Sri Raghavendraswami are truly awe-inspiring. They will kindle our interest to visit Nanjangud at least once during our life time.

We will see those happenings in the next chapter, which form part of the history of events that took place 190 years after the Brindavana pravesh of Sri Raghavendraswami. A meticulous reading of those wonderful occurrences is therefore called for at this stage.

### **SRI RAGHAVENDRA'S MYSTERIOUS DEED IN NANJANGUD**

Nanjangud is a place where Lord Anjaneya is gracing devotees!

Spiritually enlightened ones have prayed there to add to its holiness and cause spiritualism to spread out.

It is a holy place from where Sri Nanjundeswara and Sri Srikantheswara radiate their splendours. Sri Subodhendira Thirtha (tenth in the exalted seat of the Sri

Mutt, after Sri Raghavendraswami) and Sri Sujanendra Thirtha (eleventh in the same line) have caused the Madhwa cult to spread far and wide for the good of mankind and have performed several wondrous deeds. These great souls have also entered their Brindavana here, making the place all the more sacred.

After Sri Sujanendra Thirtha had entered the Brindavan in 1836, Sri Raghavendrachar took charge as the head of the Sri Mutt - the thirteenth in the line of succession, with the holy name Sri Sugnyanendra Thirtha-and started ruling over the religious empire, in the traditional way of his predecessors.

Sri Sugnyanendra Thirtha was well-versed in all the four sastras and devout in the rendering of Sri Raghavendra Ashtakshara Mantra Japa. As a result, his face would always be reflecting a brilliance and presenting a graceful look.

Years rolled by! It was about 25 years since the pontiff had occupied the venerable seat-the year 1861.

The then ruler of Mysore, Mummudi Krishnaraja wodeyar, had great attachment and veneration towards Sri Raghavendraswami and Sri Sugnyanendra Thirtha. He would often send his emissaries to find out the needs of the Sri Mutt and thus provide necessary assistance to it, whenever required.

As Nanjangud was close to Mysore, Sosale and Srirangapatnam, it was easy for the Mysore Maharaja to get information from there. Further, Sri Sugnyanendra Thirtha's spiritual powers acquired through penance was drawing everyone towards him and the maharaja too was lured by that.



It was Sri Raghavendraswami, who was the cause for the yogic powers of Sri Sugnyanendra Thirtha.

Yes! In part I, we have seen about Sri Vadindra Thirtha in the chapter titled, 'Sri Raghavendraswami's Brindavana shakes'. Who was that Vadindra Thirtha? It was none else than Sri Raghavendra's purvashrama grandson.

In the same lineage, Sri Vadindra Thirtha's purvashrama son was Sri Dhirendra Thirtha, about whom we/ will be seeing in detail later. And Sri Sugnyanendra Thirtha was the purvashrama grandson of Sri Dhirendra Thirtha.

Therefore, his birth having been in the lineage of Sri Raghavendraswami who was endowed with yogic powers of the highest order, Sri Sugnyanendra Thirtha too had such prowess in no small measure.

Sri Sugnyanendra Thirtha had a long felt desire that he should also enter the Brindavan near Sri Raghavendraswami.

At the appropriate time, he went to Mantralaya and submitted his heart's desire to Sri Raghavendraswami in an obdurate and poignant manner, most worshipfully.

He was then besieged by the thought that having made submission to Sri Swami, it was left to him to do whatever he deemed fit.

That night he had a dream. It was Sri Raghavendraswami who appeared in the dream.

'Sugnyanendra, I have heard your prayer. Your desire will be fulfilled.'

‘I am privileged, Swami.’

‘You are going to enter the Brindavan near me.’

‘Through your grace, for me too in Mantra.....’

‘No, not in Mantralaya.’

‘Swami, just now you revealed to me that you will fulfil my desire, but now....’

‘I am telling you the same thing. You start from here and proceed to Nanjangud.’

‘To Nanjangud is it....?’

‘Yes’.

‘I am going to get consecrated at Nanjangud. You start...’

Next day, Sri Sugnyanendra worshipped Sri Raghavendra with tearful eyes.

‘Swami, as desired by you, I am going there. I now realise that the significance of Maharaja Krishnaraja Wodeyar sending a British officer to me is as an advance indication to me of the events to follow. Oh, how privileged he is, after Thomas Munroe!’ With these thoughts, Sugnyanendra Thirtha left for Nanjangud.

Before Sugnyanendra Thirtha reaches Nanjangud, let us know about the incident involving the British official.

Mysore Maharaja Krishnaraja Wodeyar’s great devotion towards Sri Raghavendra and the pontiffs of that lineage can only be attributed to the good deeds of his past birth. Because, involvement in divine service is

possible only as a result of such good deeds. And Krishnaraja Wodeyar had done such good deeds in plenty and will be doing more of those in the incidents that follow in this chapter.

As was customary, the Maharaja sent an official to Nanjangud to find out whether any assistance was required by the Sri Mutt, but this time it was a British officer, who was sent on the errand. And when the official reached there, those connected with the temple were hesitant to permit his entry into the holy precincts, but when he announced that he was an emissary from the Maharaja and that he also had immense bhakti towards the presiding deity there, he was admitted inside.

The Britisher, who was having darshan of the Vayu Murthi, facing north, suddenly became ecstatic and called out 'Swami, Swami', with his eyes fixed on a wooden plank used for sitting, that was kept facing the eastern side. Those who were around, were astonished and could not make out anything. For, there was only the empty plank there, which could seat only one person. But the British officer was repeatedly telling, 'Are you not able to see there the Swami seated on that plank?'

Even Sugnyanendra Thirtha could not at that time understand the hidden meaning of it. But now, his mind is engrossed in these thoughts as he is returning from Mantralaya.

'Guru Raghavendra, you gave darshan to Thomas Munroe from inside the Brindavan, but for this devotee you have come outside the Brindavan to give him

darshan. When I expressed the desire to enter my Brindavan near you, you directed me to go to Nanjangud.... When is there going to be consecration for you there and by whom....? In my dream, as also through the British official, you have made prior announcement about your getting consecrated at Nanjangud.... and henceforth, every day my thought will be centred around when that event will take place', reflected Sri Sugnyanendra Thirtha, as he reached Nanjangud.

On reaching there, he had a further dream and following his dream, Sir Raghavendra appeared in the dream of three others also.

Apart from appearing in the dream of the Swami, Sri Raghavendra appeared in Mysore Maharaja's dream and also of a Brahmin of Srirangapatnam, besides that of a washerman too, creating a wonderful linkage. It would be most interesting to see what message he had passed on in their dreams and how certain events about which he had given clues, had indeed taken place later.

The first dream occurs to Sri Sugnyanendra Thirtha:-

'Sugnyanendra.....'

'Swami.....'

'In another three days, I shall establish myself in Nanjangud. You make all arrangements necessary for the consecration.'

'Even the Brindavana is not yet ready, Swami.'

'Don't worry about it. Be ready for the consecration.'

‘Yes, Swami.’

The second dream occurs to Mysore Maharaja Krishnaraja Wodeyar, a sanyasi appearing in the dream:-

‘Maharaja.....’

‘Swami.....’

‘Day after tomorrow, in the afternoon, you must welcome me and honour me.’

‘How can I.....?’

‘You mean, knowing my identity? A Brahmin will bring me, holding me. I shall be going to Nanjangud.’

‘As you ordain, Swami.’

The third dream - to a Brahmin in Srirangapatnam - again a Hindu religious mendicant appearing in the dream:-

‘Oh, holy Brahmin.....’

‘Swami.....’

‘Tomorrow morning you will find me on the river bed of the Cauveri. Take me to Nanjangud from there.’

‘How can I find you on the bank of the river, Swami?’

‘You go there in the morning tomorrow, everything will happen.’

Yet another dream - a fourth one - this time to a washerman - a sanyasi again figuring in the incident:-

‘Dear One.....’

‘Swami.....’

‘Please entrust me to a Brahmin tomorrow.’

‘I don’t understand anything, Swami.’

‘As usual, you go to the Cauvery tomorrow. You will know everything. And there will be good things happening thereafter.’

It was the next morning!

The washerman, as usual, took his bundle of clothes to the Cauvery and was getting ready to wash them.

‘A sanyasi had told me in my dream, “Please entrust me to Brahmin tomorrow” -but who should be entrusted and to whom?’ was the puzzling thought that was passing through the launderer’s mind, as he set about the task of washing the clothes.

Like the washerman, the Brahmin who had a dream, was also on the banks of the river early in the morning, with great expectation.

‘The holy man had said, “Find me out on the banks of the Cauveri and take me to Nanjangud - but whom should I search or and how should I look for him?”.’ So thinking, the Brahmin was approaching the spot where the washerman was engaged in his chores, when he realised that a strange noise was emanating from there.

It was not the sound that the washermen normally raise while beating the clothes on the stone, but one that was in a higher decibel.

The launderer, while concentrating on his work, suddenly found a Brahmin standing in front of him and greeted him, thinking within himself, 'It appears I may have to fulfil the assignment of entrusting to this Brahmin only - but whom should I entrust to him?'.

'I say, please stop your washing for a while, as there appears to be some strange noise emanating from here', said the Brahmin, drawing the attention of the other.

'Yes please, I had not paid that much attention, busy as I was with my work', said the person, as both meticulously lent their ears to the sound.

The sound was clearly recognisable as 'Om...Om...Om' and was gradually more resonant.

'Swami, it is originating from below this stone' - so saying, the washerman turned around the stone on which he was washing the clothes, and lo, he could not believe his own eyes!

'Oh Swami, it looks like the sanyasi who came in my dream yesterday.....'

'Yes please, he is the one who appeared in my dream also,' uttered the Brahmin in great excitement and wonder, tears of joy blinding his eyes. Soon, both of them cleaned the stone and when it was taken out and seen in the open, what presented before them was a magnificent idol of him (the sanyasi) in the padmasana posture, with hands blessing the beholder! And spontaneously it evoked the veneration of both of them, making them prostrate before the idol.







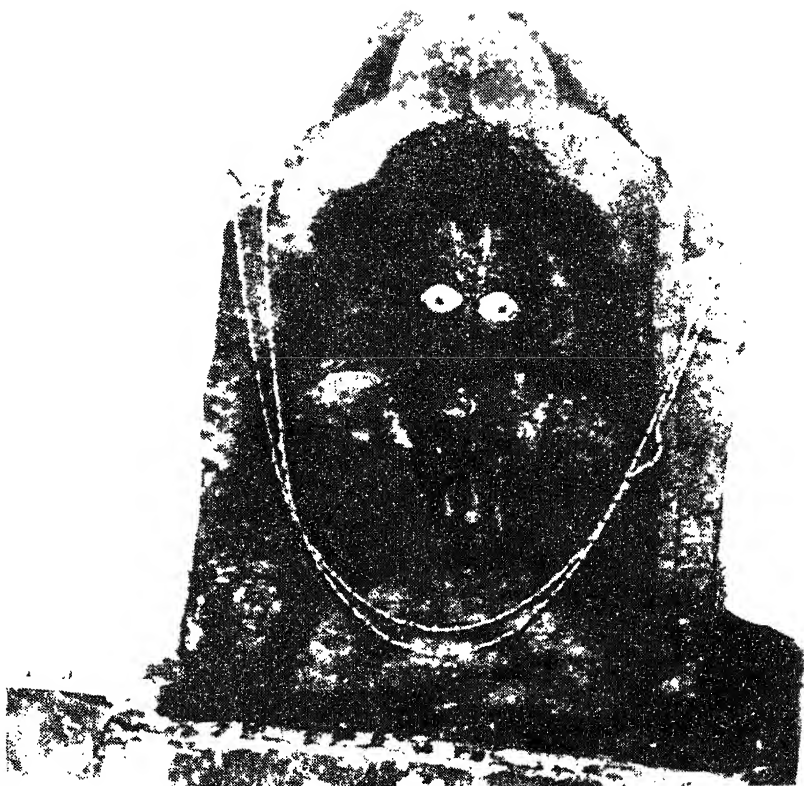
The washerman expressed his anguish that he had all the while been thinking it to be an ordinary stone and using it for washing the clothes on.

Neither the Brahmin nor the washerman could make out whose figure the idol represented. But since their dreams had come true, the stone image was taken to the Brahmin's house and worshipped with great devotion and fervour. People thronged there in large numbers for worshipping it, when news about the strange find spread around the area.

Next morning, the Brahmin was bound for Nanjangud (from Srirangapatnam), carrying the holy idol on his head, as revealed to him in his dream. Certain others also accompanied him in a cluster, uttering mantras. And by the afternoon they were nearing Mysore.

At the entry point to Mysore, there was a big crowd with garlands and a variety of musical instruments, to give them a rousing welcome. The Brahmin and his followers did not however know its purpose.

As they neared the crowd of people, Mysore Maharaja Krishnaraja Wodeyar was sighted there, but the group of travellers thought that the royalty and the retinue were waiting there for some important dignitary. It was only when all of them fell before the religious group in prostration that the Brahmin could comprehend that there must have been a Divine guidance to His Highness too, just as he had himself been directed to the banks of the Cauvery. And in his exuberance, the Brahmin was in tears of joy.







The washerman and the Brahmin then recounted to the Maharaja most respectfully, their strange experience, and in the same way, the king also told them that he had been ordained in his dream, to give them a grand welcome. The king and his men then accompanied the group to Nanjangud in the midst of great jubilation and mirth, symbolised by the playing of a variety of musical instruments.

At Nanjangud, Sri Sugnyanendra Thirtha was in meditation, chanting the name of Sri Raghavendra. Even as he was contemplating that two days were already over and by the morrow the consecration was to be done, (wondering whom he should be installing and consecrating), he could hear the din of the musical instruments and the hailing of a crowd renting the air, coming from the heavens as it were. A large number of people, led by Krishnaraja Wodeyar, then met Sri Sugnyanendra Thirtha and handed over the idol to him, narrating all the happenings.

The Swami too narrated his experiences to the gathering and every one including the Maharaja then prostrated before him, uttering 'Om Sri Raghavendraya Namaha.'

The next day, in the sastraic way, Sri Raghavendraswami's idol was installed facing east (to the left of Sri Anjaneya), in a pompous manner. One can have darshan of the saint there in the same way as seen in the picture here.

Whatever has been seen in this chapter are real occurrences that took place about 130years ago.

Happenings like these bear testimony to the fact that Sri Raghavendraswami is still alive and acting as a live influence, performing miraculous deeds from his Brindavan.

Sri Sugnyanendra Thirtha, true to his desire, entered Brindavana in Nanjangud, adjacent to Sri Raghavendra swami.

Sri Raghavendraswami's aradhana is performed in a spectacular manner every year for three days and on the fourth day the aradhana of Sri Sugnyanendra Thirtha is also observed. Sri Sugnyanendra Thirtha had only prayed for his Brindavana pravesha near Sri Raghavendraswami, but Guru Raghavendra, in fulfilling that desire of his disciple had also blessed his aradhana to follow closely behind his.

After Sri Sugnyanendra Thirtha, the 16th pontiff in the lineage of Sri Raghavendraswami, viz. Sri Supragnyendra Thirtha and the one following him viz. Sukruthendra Thirtha, also entered their Brindavanas in Nanjangud.

A visit to Nanjangud will bestow the extraordinary privilege of having darshan of not only Sri Anjaneyaswami and Sri Raghavendraswami (in the form of a rare idol) but also of the other saints who have entered their Brindavanas there.

Just as Sri Raghavendra had graced through his supernatural powers the consecrations at Nanjangud and Brindaranya (known as Tiruvallikkeni), so too the installation of a Brindavana at Athni and the manner in

which a Lingayat had been blessed to complete it, beyond description.

Oh, what a blessing it was to the Lingayat, who was a non-believer! Let us also share now the blessings that the atheist had!



## **SRI RAGHAVENDRA'S ADVENTURE AT ATHNI - A WONDER!**

Athni is a place in Karnataka. From Bijapur, there are a number of buses plying to Athni.

Situated in Belgaum district, the town has gained importance through a Lingayat and we will be knowing about it in this chapter.

There resided a wealthy Lingayat in Athni. He was a person of charitable disposition. In real life, he was disdainful of play-acting, but was, however, fond of the drama artistes, who would be playing different roles on the stage. He was himself running a drama troupe that was popular and he seldom hesitated to shell out money for the cause of fostering theatrical activity. In fact, he was inclined to spend his entire riches for staging dramas.

Apart from the dramatic field, he was also lured by photography. He was therefore lavish in spending on those who would seek his help in dramatic or photographic pursuits. While his lending will be strictly against security to a few, in most cases he would part with his money, without even the consideration whether or not he would get repayment. And to the poor, he would always make liberal donations, in cash or kind.



Despite possessing such good qualities, the Lingayat was ill-disposed towards Divine worship. To him, Godliness and the Brahmins who propagated devotion towards the Almighty, were detestable. He always contended that those who acted on the stage did so, only for entertainment, whereas there were scores of people who, in real life, were putting up a show of being virtuous, in the name of God. But he had never prevented his friends/associates being devout and would only mock at them occasionally, for their being theistic.

In part I, we have seen how during one of the pada yatras of Sri Raghavendraswami, a boy had been tutored by some to lie down and pretend as being dead, with the evil intent of making it known that the much talked about supernatural powers of the saint was only a hoax on the public and that he had no such prowess at all - but what happened ultimately was altogether different, the boy actually being found dead and the drama enacted turning out to be a reality. And it was the Lingayats who had arranged for the enactment of that drama then.

Strangely, the key figure in this chapter is also a Lingayat, but the bountiful grace that he had from Sri Raghavendra are indeed memorable and they are going to be seen in detail here.

The generosity of the Lingayat of Athni, turned out to be his undoing, in the end. His riches started dwindling, as confidence tricksters, taking advantage of his zest for theatrical activities, always set their eyes upon grabbing

from him whatever possible, on the pretext of staging dramas.

Poor Lingayat! He was left in dire straits before long, with only a few thick friends showing concern for him.

A well-wisher, at that juncture, thought that the Lingayat should be in a position to absorb his counselling in that state of mind that was bereft of ideas then, just as water would get soaked in a land scorching under intense heat.

‘Friend, it seems you are in some mental anguish, is it not so?’

‘Yes, how does it matter now?’

‘Just as you have not been interfering in my affairs, I too have not so far pried into your personal affairs, professional matters or even your atheistic stand.’

‘Does it mean that you will now be poking your nose in those?’

‘No, not that. But I am concerned about your present mental state and am of the opinion that it warrants a change of place for you.’

‘I too feel that way, but where to go?’

‘I shall suggest a place and if you could come there with me, I would be most happy.’

‘Yes, I shall accompany you; please tell me the place.’

‘Mantralaya .....’

‘Is it Mantralaya; no I will not.’

‘Why please?’

‘It is said Raghavendra’s Brindavana is there and stories are spread that he is still alive. How do you expect me to come to such a place?’

‘I am not asking you to have darshan of Sri Raghavendra, but only suggesting a change of place to overcome your depression. If you just come to Mantralaya, that will suffice’.

The Lingayat, after deep consideration conveyed his acceptance, saying, ‘Alright I shall come there, but I should be left to myself and there should be no compulsion to me from your side.’

The friend agreed to the condition put forth by the Lingayat and soon they both left for Mantralaya.

At Mantralaya, the friend who had accompanied the atheist was devoutly circumambulating the Brindavana, mentally worshipping Sri Raghavendra. The Lingayat, sitting aloof, was watching not only his friend’s actions, but also of numerous others going around the Brindavana in great veneration, evoking in him an instinctive reaction of derision and jeer.

It hardly needs any stress here that if even after losing money and riches the Lingayat continued to be a pagan, it only underscores how stubborn he was about his atheistic convictions. And surely an overnight change in such a person was something next to impossible.

However, later, as both the friends returned to Ath something strange happened, which even the Lingy could not have expected in the least.

Yes, a person who had borrowed an amount Rs.50,000/- from the Lingayat, returned it to him w interest, that left the creditor stunned in disbelief. F the person who had taken the sum, had been dodgi repayment for long and the Lingayat lender had almo written it off as irrecoverable.

Indeed it presented a pleasant surprise to t Lingayat when he got back the money, immediately af his visit to Mantralaya. And this incident, in its trail, s him thinking about the mysterious influence Mantralaya.

“Oh, if just a visit to Mantralaya and setting foot that soil should have brought about this unexpect benefit to me without even my having darshan of : Raghavendra, what could have been the result if I shou have had darshan of him. Ah, what a despicable belie was holding all these days. While those whom I trust have let me down, how fortunate I have been in havi the grace of Sri Raghavendra, in whom I had no faith all. Henceforth, I shall look to him only as my saviou reflected the Lingayat.

His mind then started hovering around Mantrala and visualising about that holy place.

In consequence, like Purandaradasa, he cast aw all his belongings and reached Mantralaya ere long w just a tambura in his hand, which he had earlier be using for his stage performances.

During the previous visit he was derisive, but now different - devout and worshipful. He would have his bath in the Tungabhadra and going around the Brindavan of Sri Raghavendra in pradakshana, he would be singing marvellous kirtanas and twanging the string of the lute in his hand, in great veneration. Before long, Athni was put out of his mind and he continued his stay at Mantralaya for months together.

In course of time, he composed numerous devotional hymns and bhaktas hearing him render such songs with bhava (to the accompaniment of the Tambura sruti), were always left spell-bound.

The tongue that had earlier decried and ridiculed Divine worship in stage enactments, started chanting the holy name of Sri Raghavendra and singing his praise that there was nothing to match his greatness.

After 12 years of such devotional service by the bhakta, Sri Raghavendra ordained him, 'Oh bhakta! You have remained very long at this place. You should leave for Athni now.'

'Oh Lord, how can I go there leaving you? You may order me to do anything else and that will be carried out by me without demur. But, please don't ask me to leave you, Swami.....'

'I am asking you to do this, for a specific reason. You have been very devout to me, wholly depending upon me, but will you not listen to my advice?'

'Yes, I shall abide by your advice Swami. I shall start from here tomorrow itself, but please let me know the reason for your sending me there.'

‘I want my Brindavan to be installed and consecrated at Athni. Only you have to do that....’

‘Oh, what a blessing it is Swami!’

Soon, the Lingayat devotee, as ordained by the Swami, made all arrangements for accomplishing the task assigned to him by the Guru in his dream and in a quick time a Brindavan was consecrated at Athni. The Moolika Brindavan there, is to this day drawing numerous devotees and its fame is spreading far and wide, every day.

Even today, some of the devotees doing seva at Mantralaya, are ordained in their dreams to go to Athni and worship there.

This incident took place around 1945-46. Several persons who had seen that devotee during his twelve years’ stay at Mantralaya, are still alive and fondly narrate their recollections of those days.

When I met some of them, they mentally visualise the scene of that bhakta composing kirtanas on Sri Raghavendra and worshipfully rendering them before the Moola Brindavana - recounting those events to me with a deep sense of awe and respect. On my part, I have also shared with you now, those extraordinary happenings.

A visit to Mantralaya and Athni will be a good experience to know about the greatness of Sri Raghavendra and his mysterious powers.

There are a few other incidents like this finding place later, which reveal similar mental transformations

undoubtedly attributable to the supernatural powers of the saint.

The queer incident of Kamalakar Joshi, a non-believer being graced by the Guru, is to be seen after a few chapters. Likewise, we are also to see how Balraj, who was deriding God and spreading atheism, becomes a staunch devotee dedicated to the cause of propagating the worship of Sri Raghavendra. He is ever busy now, rendering discourses on the greatness of the saint and moving about to places for such divine service.

What we are to see next in the chapter that follows, is an entirely different happening. It will truly be amazing to know in what all ways Sri Raghavendra graces his devotees. And in this bizarre incident also, a Brindavan gets installed at yet another place. Let us move on to Sirigolla to know about this.



### **SRI RAGHAVENDRA'S MIRACLE IN SIRIGOLLA**

We have seen in detail in part I how Sri Raghavendra has revealed his divine powers in the raising of the Moola Brindavana at Mantralaya and had got it accomplished for him.

In fact, if one were to delve into the background behind the establishment of everyone of the numerous mrithika Brindavanas spread all over the country, there will certainly be something strange behind each one of them, ascribable to his extraordinary powers.

Take Brindaranya for instance, or for that matter Nanjangud or Athni - oh, what an enjoyable experience it

is to picturise mentally about Sri Raghavendra's mysterious deeds connected with those places!

Truly, if we should also be steadfast in our devotion towards him and be ever worshipful, we can, in reality, experience such mystical happenings flowing out of his spiritual powers, rather than be visualising them in our mind's eye.

Sri Raghavendra does not expect his devotees to throw away their riches to worship him. On the other hand, he is ever ready to shower his blessings on us, if we adore him with just bare hands.

In fact, it was the power of the mrithika given by him that had caused a ghost to bring gold and valuables for celebrating the marriage of a disciple. He had created the necessary situation for it, not only for the sake of the devout sishya, but also for granting deliverance to the ghostly spirit.

Sri Raghavendra will demand and get things done for him. At the same time, he will also grace his devotees wholly dependant upon him, with such mercies as they deserve, when beseeched of him.

In the incident figuring here, a bhakta, with intense devotion, makes a submission to Sri Raghavendra. The Guru, accepting it, prefers in turn, a request of his to the devotee! Let us see it now in detail.

Sirigolla was a small village. The public of the place had to go to Bellary - a distance of 24 Kms - for their trading activities. They had to walk the distance in those days, there being no proper vehicular conveyance at that time.



Those undertaking a pilgrimage or going to the neighbouring centres, had to traverse the distance only on foot. And a devotee of that place, to have darshan of Sri Raghavendra, used to walk the entire distance from Sirigolla to Mantralaya! He will be present at Mantralaya at least annually during the aradhana - though not as often as he craved to have darshan of the Swami there.

The bhakta was thus visiting Mantralaya for several years during the aradhana celebrations, without any break. He was a village accountant of Sirigolla and was well known by the name Madhava Rao.

Sri Madhava Rao was getting old and around 1741-42, he made up his mind before journey to Mantralaya that he should seek the permission of Sri Raghavendra for a proposal that he had thought of.

This time, even to reach Mantralaya, Madhava Rao had to encounter lot of difficulties - the heart was no doubt pining to have darshan of the Guru, but his age was telling upon him and the physical constraints were almost insurmountable.

He was always possessed by the thought how he could get back to the village by foot, after having darshan of the Guru.

‘Oh, how many years and how many aradhanas have passed till now! Guru Raghavendra, by chanting your name and drawing strength from it, I have enjoyed physical stamina till now and have come thus far. Will I be able to continue any further.....?’ Engrossed in these thoughts, Madhava Rao, after his bath in the Tungabhadra, came and stood before the Brindavana

worshipfully, chanting stotras and offering prayers to Sri Raghavendra.

“Appa, Guru Raghavendra! It is on account of your grace that I am standing before you now. I have been running to this place for your darshan, whenever I yearned to see you. But this time, I have an inner feeling that this may be my last visit to the place. Without being able to see you and worshipping your Brindavana, what is the purpose of my continuing to live? Old age is common to all and unavoidable. But whatever blessings I deserve, please now grace me with those.....I am not sure whether I will be able to get back to my village in the present state of my health that is already fragile, Appa Guru Raja,” prostrated the devotee before the Brindavana, with tears in his eyes.

That night, Madhava Rao, with cares occupying his mind, could not sleep till midnight and only at that late hour he could doze off a little. It was in this state of mind that he had a dream that was most gladdening - a dream that was giving him the clue to his prayers. And Madhava Rao, at once, overcame all his depressed feelings, on seeing Sri Raghavendraswami, in his dream.

‘Madhava, your prayer to me is quite justifiable. It is really great that despite your old age, you have come here now.....’

‘It is all your grace, Swami.’

‘You must go back to your place, tomorrow itself.’

‘As you ordain, Swami. But will it be physically

‘Yes, it will be feasible, but while travelling you should not look behind, even for a moment.’

‘Yes, I shall abide by the advice, Swami,’ said Madhava Rao, without even asking the reason why he was being told to do so. But, he was all the while seized by the thought about the strange requirement that he had been asked to comply with, as a result of which he could not have a comfortable sleep that night.

Next morning, the devotee rose up early and after his bath and the daily rituals, started homeward, chanting the holy name of Sri Raghavendra. As ordained by the Guru, he did not turn even once to look behind him.

But strangely, as he wended his way, he could hear some footsteps behind him, there being a distinctive noise that was suggestive of someone wearing wooden sandals walking closely in the rear and keeping pace with his strides. He was curious to know about it, but refrained from looking behind, in accordance with the divine guidance that he had through Sri Raghavendra.

Oh, at how many places he had rested during his journey to Mantralaya! But now he was brisk as a calf and walking enthusiastically, without being tired.

At one place however, he stopped for a while. At that time, the sound of the footsteps too ceased. Later, as he started walking fast, the noise of the wooden sandals was catching up with him and varying in pitch according to the pace of his walking.

At last, Madhava Rao reached home after a long journey. And as he entered into the house, he realised

that the sound of the wooden sandals that had constantly been keeping pace with his movement, had stopped all of a sudden.

And lo, there was yet another bizarre occurrence awaiting him, no sooner than he moved into the front room from the rear portion of the house, when, to his amazement, he beheld a pair of wooden sandals left there by someone unseen. In an instant, Madhava Rao, realising the situation, burst out loudly, 'Prabho Raghavendra,' in great reverence, prostrating before the sacred footwear. He then took the pair of slippers in his hands with immense bhakti and holding them on his head started dancing in great ecstasy and happiness that knew no bounds.

'Oh, what a blessing it is and how benevolent you have been! I had expressed my anguish inwardly and submitted to you in my prayer that I was doubtful whether I may be able to have darshan of you again - getting physically weak as I was every day - but how merciful you have been in following me to this place and leaving your sacred footwear here, for me to worship!' rejoiced the devotee in extreme blissfulness.

That day, Madhava Rao did not leave his house and was totally immersed in doing pujas to the object of worship left behind by the Guru.

Be that so, we should at this juncture, analyse in depth, about this incident.

What was it that Madhava Rao had prayed to the Guru at Mantralaya? In fact, he had only supplicated to

come there again, whatever grace he was deemed fit to be blessed with, should be extended to him then and there.

We have seen that he was sceptical about even returning to his village in the state of physical infirmity that he was subject to during his journey to Mantralaya. But the Swami had not only enthused him to undertake his homeward journey, but also accompanied him unseen and left behind him his sacred wooden sandals at his home, for his worship.

But, is it possible that such a thing could have happened? How can one give credence to an incident supposed to have taken place in the 18th century - that too after two centuries - is the question that may occur in the minds of most people.

At least, the Thomas Munroe episode of the 19th century, had the authenticity of the official gazette noting. But, what is the proof for this happening at Sirigolla?

Sri Raghavendra, to dispel any such doubts that may arise due to passage of time, has caused a similar occurrence to take place in the recent past.

Just as the Swami left behind his wooden slippers at Sirigolla, he has engineered something similar to happen at Jolarpet, in our own state, not long ago. In another chapter we are to know about the mysterious deed of Sri Raghavendra at Jolarpet. Thus, many queer happenings are taking place even today that bear testimony to the fact that he is still alive in the Moola Brindavana and causing such things to occur. In fact, our life span is too short to compile and write about them all.

bhakta who had been trekking the distance to and fro for so many years, Swami had deemed it proper to grace him in a fitting manner and therefore had walked the distance with him, unseen.

While so, Guru Raghavendra appeared again in the dream of Madhava Rao that night, not being satisfied with just the grace he had extended to him by leaving behind him the sacred footwear of his for the worship of the devotee. And Madhava Rao had the strange dream when he was fast asleep, in a state of absolute mental peace that he had, after the performance of the pada puja (the worship of the sacred wooden slippers of the Guru).

'Madhava.....'

'Swami.....'

'Is this not your house?'

'Yes, Swami.'

'You will have to vacate this house.'

'It will be done accordingly, Swami.'

'Are you not concerned about knowing why and what for it should be done? What will you do without a house for you to live?'

'There is yet another place for me, Swami.'

'If so, please give this home to me, Madhava.'

'I am pleased, Swami, it will be done accordingly.'

Next morning, Madhava Rao woke up thinking, 'Sri Raghevendra wanted this house, but when should it be entrusted to him? It did not occur to me to ask him how it

should be handed over to him.' The devotee then went to the backyard of the house and after completion of his ablutions and the religious rituals, re-entered the house with the thought that it was no longer his. But, when he came to the central portion of the house, there was a surprise awaiting him and he could not believe his own eyes at what they espied.

Yes, Madhava Rao found there a holy staff, some sanctified rice and basil leaves left behind by someone, unseen. And instinctively the devotee prostrated before them in great wonderment, exclaiming, 'Guru Raghavendra' in a kind of joy that knew no bounds.

In no time, news of the strange happenings spread around the place and people started gathering there in large numbers to offer their worship. Later, the residents of the village, realising that for the sake of Madhava Rao, the saint had caused his presence to be felt there, installed a beautiful Brindavana for Sri Raghavendra, with white marble stones brought from a nearby place called Darasammagudda. The Brindavana was then consecrated in the sastraic way, amidst devout cries from the huge gathering that was there to participate in the event.

Undoubtedly, Sri Raghavendra is making his presence felt at various places, only in the interest of his devotees, to fulfil their cherished desires. Let us also worship him from the depth of our hearts and pray for a peaceful life, devoid of agonies.

Sri Raghavendra had made it known before his entry in the Brindavana at Mantralaya that he would be

alive in it for 700 years and true to that proclamation, he is to this day causing mysterious things to happen through his supernatural powers. But one may wonder in what physical state the Guru will still be existing in the Brindavana.

It is an intricate matter no doubt, but Sri Raghavendra himself is offering solution to it! We shall see in the next chapter whether he will be existing in the Brindavana in his own physical state or in an astral state.

### **SRI RAGHAVENDRA'S BODILY PRESENCE**

In April 1994, I had gone to Mantralaya with my family. I visit that place as often as possible and make it a point to take my family also for a darshan of the saint, at least once a year. It was one such visit then.

As usual, I took the vow there for 'Sankalpa Seva'.

My children really love their trips to Mantralaya, as they are delighted with the sight of the swirling waters of the Tungabhadra and amuse themselves with their pranks, while taking bath in the rivers. Besides, during my visits to the place, I keep myself away from other pursuits and concentrate only on my seva that affords them enough time and leisure to enjoy my company.

This time, they were not only craving to have their holy bath in the river as they were wont to, but were also exhibiting an eagerness to know about the life history of the saint and the mysterious happenings associated with his supernatural powers. They raised innocent



queries like, 'How was Sri Raghavendra, when he was of our age? Where did he have his education? We are able to see only the Brindavana, but not his physical presence in front of it in a sitting posture, as seen in the pictures depicting the Brindavana - why so'?

Despite my trying to prevent them (in view of their tender age), they circumambulated the Brindavana and prostrated before it a number of times - both in the mornings and in the evenings in the manner we elders did our seva.

We enjoyed the Moola Rama puja the first two days from the mantap built there by Mallappa Shinde. At that time, the children could learn about the life of the saint from the artistic paintings adorning the walls of that mantap that present the various historical events associated with Sri Raghavendra. Among them, the one portraying him as sitting in the Brindavana in a yogic posture, is truly a marvel to behold.

Next day, I had the blessings of the pontiff Sri Sushmindra Thirtha, to perform the Kanakabhisheka. And when I was seeking his grace, the disciples in the Sri Mutt apprised the Swami about my writings and publications, with a sense of happiness.

At about 11.30 A.M., I was, along with my family members, permitted entry into the area meant for seeing the Moola Rama Puja, which normally takes place in the space between the two Brindavanas - of Sri Raghavendraswami and of Sri Vadindra Thirtha. Sri Raghavendra is very devout in the performance of the Moola Rama puja and it is believed that he performs it

early in the morning, daily, just as the present head of the Sri Mutt does it in the traditional way.

Till such time as the pontiff comes there and commences the puja, one can have close darshan of the Brindavana. I had the good fortune of having such darshan from very close quarters, which was truly a thrilling experience.

While writing Part I also, I had entered the Brindavana precincts, but not so close as on this occasion.

My being proximate to Gururaja was uppermost in my mind and so I hardly ever thought at that moment of seeking any blessing from the Guru.

My elder daughter, who was by my side, called me Appa' to draw my attention there.

'Amma, whatever you want to talk about, please come outside and share your thoughts, concentrating only on worshipping Sri Raghavendra in this holy precincts,' I told her.

'Appa is it not in this Brindavana that Sri Raghavendra is alive?'

'Yes, of course; please therefore pray to him for his grace. It is a rare privilege to have his darshan and worship him from such a close distance.'

'But father, if these stones are removed and the Brindavana dismantled, we can see the saint sitting here, is it not? And is it not possible to do that?' she asked next, leaving me perplexed.

My daughter, who asked this question had just completed six and it was her understanding that if the stones in front of the Brindavana are removed, S Raghavendra's darshan can be had directly.

And there is nothing wrong in such an idea occurring in a child's mind, as even some of us elders could think alike. While the child after all queried in an innocent manner, the same point is often raised by the atheist too, in support of their stand, to denigrate the Guru.

But, in reality, how will Sri Raghavendra be in the Brindavana now? It is generally believed by the devotees that he is still sitting inside it in a state of yoga. Alive there, he is performing miracles to this day that could easily be felt by us. His presence before several devotees on different occasions is also known to us from various sources. Besides, we also hear often about his appearing in the dreams of devotees and gracing them.

Even as these are happening, one may wonder in what physical state he will now be in the Brindavana more than 320 years after his entry into it alive. It is said that as he grew old, there was a divine radiance in his appearance which was more conspicuous when he entered the Brindavana and therefore he could be presumed to be in the same condition even now.

But, is all this possible? Can Sri Raghavendra be still in the same bodily form? The soul, no doubt, is indestructible, as told by the Lord in the Gita, but can the body also be like that.

Yes, that is the truth about the Swami - his physical body should be in the same state now, there being proof for it....!

While doubts about this may arise in the minds of all - young and old alike - it would be necessary to dispel even the slightest misgivings lurking in the hearts of devotees, leave alone the scepticism of the non-believers.

I could have started this chapter with a narration in just a short paragraph in the following manner:

Recently I had been to Mantralaya with my family. When we got the opportunity of worshipping Gururaja from very close quarters, my daughter asked me in all her innocence, "Appa, if the stones are removed, we can see Sri Raghavendra alive, is it not?" But, why is it that I am explaining things in a detailed manner?

It is because I want everyone to understand that this type of inquisitiveness is common to occur in the minds of most people, despite all knowledge about Sri Raghavendra and the belief that he is still alive.

No doubt, an easy way to establish that Sri Raghavendra is still existing in the Brindavana is to dismantle it and see the inside of it. But, will such a thing be possible or can we do it without his permission? Also, will it be in order for us to disassemble a thing that he himself had got erected under his personal supervision?

Although Sri Raghavendra has not given any message at any point of time to open up his Brindavana, another saint who had occupied the religious seat

adorned by Sri Raghavendra had ordained that his (the latter saint's) Brindavana be dismantled and this interesting episode is covered in the chapter following the next one.

It may be recalled that the Brindavana first erected for the sake of Sri Raghavendraswami was left vacant under Swami's directions and later, Sri Vadindra Thirtha had entered it and has since been there, near the Brindavana of Sri Gururaja. It was the purvashrama son of Sri Vadindra Thirtha, known by the holy name Dhirendra Thirtha (after his taking to sanyasa) who had as the eighth pontiff in the line of succession of Sri Raghavendraswami, occupied the seat made venerable by the Guru.

And it was Sri Dhirendra of such illustrious ancestry who had ordained that his Brindavana should be shifted to a different place - that too six years after he had entered his Brindavana! What happened at that time finds narration later on and it would be an hair-raising experience to know about that episode. The incident will undoubtedly offer clue to whatever doubts have been persisting about Sri Raghavendra's bodily presence in the Brindavana.

Sri Dhirendra was one who was never confined to a place and ever on the move, both in his pre-sanyasa days, as well as during the period of his asceticism that later ended with his entering his Brindavana.

Strangely, even after entry into his Brindavana, he chose to shift the place of his resting....!

Sri Dharendra's missionary tours are very fascinating and let us move on to the next chapter to get ourselves absorbed in those.

## **DHIRENDRA WHO NEVER STAYED IN A PLACE**

Sri Vadindra Thirtha was the fifth head of the Sri Mutt, after Sri Raghavendraswami had ornamented that august seat by his occupancy. It was for the sake of the same Vadindra Thirtha and his poetic composition 'Gurugunastavana' that the Brindavana of Sri Raghavendra had wobbled, signifying the appreciation of the guru for the excellence of that work, when it was rendered before the Swami for his blessings. We have seen this in detail in Part I.

Vadindra Thirtha's purvashrama son was Jayaramachar. He had his father himself as his Guru and under his tutelage he had acquired vast knowledge in all fields of art, besides a debating skill that was unmatched in excellence.

Later, he got married and became the father of three sons and a daughter. Though leading a family life, Jayaramachar was unshakeably drawn towards acquiring spiritual knowledge and as such forsake his family life and left on a religious tour around the country.

About this time, Sri Vadindra Thirtha had become very old and was in the state of attaining mukti. Therefore, he made his elder brother's son, Purushothamachar, take up sainthood with the holy name Sri Vasudendra Thirtha.

Not long after, Sri Vadindra entered his Brindavana. Sri Jayaramachar had not however returned to Mantralaya, even after that. Consequently, when it was time for Sri Vasudendra Thirtha also to enter the Brindavana, he made his purvashrama brother Balaramacharya take up sanyasa with the holy name Varadendra Thirtha. Sri Vasudendra Thirtha later attained mukti and entered the Brindavana at Kanchanagudda in 1761.

Here we have to examine an important aspect. Some researchers have opined that because Jayaramachar had not returned in time, Sri Vasudendra had caused Balaramacharya to take up sainthood and occupy the religious seat of the Mutt (as Sri Varadendra Thirtha).

This is however far from the truth as Sri Varadendra had not got the honour of occupying the pontificate by force of circumstances, but on his own merits like others - being well-versed in spiritual as well as other fields of knowledge.

The greatness of Sri Varadendra can best be explained by the fact that Sri Raghavendra himself, during his life time, had made a prophetic pronouncement that Sri Varadendra Thirtha would be occupying the exalted seat of the Sri Mutt, as the seventh pontiff after him. Such was the celebrity of Sri Varadendra!

Once, Sri Varadendra had visited Poona to contest in a debate with one Rama Sastry, who was a great pundit. The latter had won contests against almost all

the learned ones and was priding over his supremacy with an arrogance that there was none to match him in intellectual brilliance.

Sri Varadendra outshone Rama Sastry in a contest of wits and the latter, at last, accepted his defeat gracefully. Not only that, he also gifted his house to Sri Varadendra, with a sense of immense exuberance.

When the intellectual battle was thus going on between the two, Sri Jayarmachar whose whereabouts was not known till then, arrived there all of a sudden. In the debating contest, he lent his support to Sri Varadendra, being equally knowledgeable and learned as the pontiff himself.

Subsequent to this, Sri Jayaramachar, with the permission of the Swami, returned to Mantralaya to see his family members. Sri Varadendra, however, continued his camping at Poona.

Some time later, Sri Jayaramachar again started on his religious tour and even at that point of time, Sri Varadendra had not returned to Mantralaya from Poona.

While so, Sri Varadendra started realising that his end was nearing and was greatly concerned that Sri Jayaramachar was not near him then.

There was no communication facility in those days, as obtaining now, and so Varadendra Thirtha sent messengers all around to look for Jayaramachar and bring him there, if traced. But, as they were all not successful in their mission, Sri Varadendra submitted himself in prayer to Sri Raghavendra, venting from the depth of his heart, 'Gururaja, my health is now on the



decline and it occurs to me that Jayaramachar should be conferred monkhood. No doubt there are many accomplished sanyasis in the Sri Mutt itself, who deserve the honour of performing the Moola Rama puja. But still, I am desirous of passing on that privilege to Jayaramachar, as he carries with him rich experience and vast knowledge of things. Unfortunately, it is not known where he is now. I therefore seek your grace of finding a solution to this problem and making Jayaramachar being present here somehow.'

As any prayer to Gururaja from the depth of one's heart will never go in vain, Sri Raghavendra appeared in the dream of Jayaramachar then engaged in seva at Sri Vijayeendra Swami's Brindavana at Kumbakonam. In the dream, Sri Raghavendraswami enlightened him saying, 'Jayarama, you must take to sainthood here itself without delay and proceed to Poona to meet Varadendra and get his spiritual advice!'

Accordingly, Jayaramachar went to Poona in the attire of a monk and had the holy incantation from Sri Varadendra. The pontiff also conferred on him the holy name 'Dhirendra Thirtha,'

Sri Varadendra became alright in health as soon as he saw Dhirendra and performed the Moola Rama puja with great joy.

Sri Dhirendra thereafter obtained the blessings of his guru and left on a missionary tour, as he had taken up saintly way of life and was bound to follow that tradition.

A little later, Sri Varadendra's health was again on the decline. There was no way of knowing where Sri

Dhirendra was, at that time also. Therefore, as the Moola Rama puja had to be performed without let up, Sri Vardendra Thirtha conferred sainthood on his purvashrama brother Sri Lakshminarayanachar, giving him the holy name 'Sri Bhuvanendra Thirtha'. He then attained mukti and entered his Brindavana at Poona.

Subsequently, when Sri Bhuvanendra too embarked upon a missionary tour and came to Mantralaya, there was a surprise awaiting him at that holy place. Yes, Sri Dhirendra also had come there at that time!

Sri Bhuvanendra, on seeing Sri Dhirendra, became ecstatic. He then honoured him and made him occupy the seat of the pontiff, as it was Sri Dhirendra who had taken to sanyasa earlier. Sri Bhuvanendra also had the holy incantation from him. Many learned ones had the blessing of Sri Dhirendra then and among them was Sri Jagannatha Dasaru also.

Sri Dhirendra, however, handed over charge of the Sri Mutt to Sri Bhuvanendra and as was his wont, started on a religious tour. Finally, after visiting several places, he entered Brindavana in 1785-86 - in the year Krodhi (1707), on Phalguna, Sukla paksha, Thriyodasi - at a place called Hosaritti. Sri Bhuvanendra hastened to the place and consecrated the Brindavana with utmost devotion.

One may wonder what connection is there between Sri Dhirendra entering the Brindavana and our inquisitiveness to know about the present physical condition of Sri Raghavendraswami in his Brindavana.

Yes, there is a link between the two and it is because of that, all these are being covered exhaustively with the expectation that readers will indulge in knowing about them.

Sri Dhirendra, as has been seen, was not confined to any one place, when he was Jayaramachar and was always on the move. After becoming a saint too he was mobile, seldom remaining in a place for long.

Strangely, even after his entering into the Brindavana and its consecration, he wanted to change his place of resting, that too six years after the installation of that Brindavana! It was a baffling incident that finds narration in the next few pages.

### **THE EVER RADIANT DHIRENDRA**

It was the sixth year after Sri Dhirendra had entered the Brindavana. Quite strangely, he appeared in the dream of a disciple of the Sri Mutt at that point of time and revealed to him, 'Appa! I am not happy to be resting at the place where my Brindavana has been erected. My entombment should therefore be consecrated again on the banks of the Varada river - not by taking the mrithika there, but by shifting my mortal remains to that place.'

The disciple could not understand anything and was left wondering how the mortal remains of the holy person could be exhumed for entombment again and also where the Brindavana should be erected on the banks of the Varada river. He shuddered to think what should be done if Sri Dhirendra should again be telling that the

place he had indicated was a different one and not where the interment had been done.

Those at the Sri Mutt were aslo at a loss to make out the purport of the message conveyed in the dream of the disciple.

But soon the doubts in the minds of all of them came to be laid to rest, through a Veerasaivaite. Yes, a person belonging to that caste met those at the Sri Mutt and told them, 'Swami, Sri Dhirendra appeared in my dream and demanded of me that my land on the bank of the Varada river be made available to him. I am therefore desirous of handing over that land, 'leaving everyone nonplussed. Shortly thereafter, the promised land was gifted by him in the name of Sri Dhirendra Thirtha.

The disciples at Sri Mutt informed Sri Bhuvanendra of all the strange happenings and the pontiff was perplexed and overjoyed at what he heard. He then advised his followers what all should be done in the sastraic way and fixed an auspicious date for the consecration of the new Brindavana. The purvashrama son of Sri Dhirendra was sent word about the sanctifying ceremony.

Soon, a magnificent Brindavana was raised for Sri Dhirendra. But, even as the date of the consecration was fast nearing, Sri Bhuvanendra had not arrived there from his missionary tour. So, the people at the Sri Mutt, in consultation with the purvashrama son of Sri Bhuvanendra, decided to dismantle at an auspicious time the Brindavana in which the mortal remains of Sri

Dhirendra Thirtha had been entombed, more than five years earlier.

On the day earmarked for the opening of the Brindavana, thousands of devotees had gathered there with the fond hope of having darshan of Sri Dhirendra again.

It was the time for disassembling the structure. And even at that hour the operations were delayed in eager expectation that Sri Bhuvanendra would soon be there. But when it was belied, the pundits and the learned ones joined the disciples of the Sri Mutt and started removing the stones of the Brindavana in the midst of devout cries and chantings of those assembled there.

Close on the heels of the dismantling of the Brindavana, those involved in the task started digging the place. Here, it must be borne in mind that in the Brindavana of Sri Raghavendra (which he himself had got constructed), the Swami had entered it alive and is still living in it. But in the case of saintly persons whose mundane existence meets the predestined end (like Sri Dhirendra's), it is customary to dig a pit to a depth of nine feet and lay to rest therein the mortal remains of the holy person (in the sastraic way), before erecting a Brindavana for him at that place.

The Brindavana of Sri Dhirendra (consecrated in this manner) was dismantled brick by brick and the place dug up. And when that was completed, Sri Dhirendra was slowly lifted up from his resting place. The crowd that had thronged there became ecstatic and raised cries of Divine names in great veneration, when



the body of the saint was sighted. The bhaktas were drowned in a sea of perplexity and delight as the mortal remains were brought out and could be seen there distinctly by those present around.

And lo, they could not believe what they saw, as Sri Dhirendra presented an appearance no different from what he was at the time of his emtombment - his body looking as fresh as a flower that had just blossomed, radiating the same lustre and luminosity as at the time of its consecration in the Brindavana. Besides, the garland of tulsi leaves around his neck was also looking fresh and so too the aromatic substance and perfumes sprinkled on his person were emitting their fragrance like the ones just sprayed around. The undisturbed nama and akshata on him too presented another sight for wonderment.

Whether all these were a dream or reality, one could not make out in that environment. Shouts hailing Sri Dhirendra and devout cries such as 'Narayana', 'Govinda', etc. were renting the skies and echoing all around. As divine names were reverberating everywhere, a decorated palanquin was taken near the body of Sri Dhirendra, for its placement in the litter. And lo, yet another surprise awaited those present there at that time. For, the body was found to be as soft as it was at the time of its burial and no less resplendent than what it was about six years earlier!

Sri Dhirendra was then placed carefully in the palanquin and taken in procession to the newly erected Brindavana, amidst the chanting of Vedic verses and the rendering of devotional songs. His body was thereafter





consecrated in the new Brindavana in a sitting posture, in the sastraic way mentioned earlier.

This is neither fiction, nor a thing that had happened in the Krita yuga or the Treta yuga, but an incident that had taken place about two centuries ago, in the presence of thousands of devotees, for which there are historical evidences. It is truly a challenge posed to science by spiritual knowledge and its latent power.

Sri Dhirendra, has undoubtedly been responsible for the miracle of his being found in the same physical condition, years after the consecration of his mortal remains in his Brindavana. His appearance in the dreams of the disciple of Sri Mutt and of the Veerasaivaite (to accomplish the wondrous deed), are as fascinating, if not more. And it needs to be mentioned here that Sri Dhirendra had also occupied the peeta that, Sri Raghavendraswami had adorned during his sainthood.

Through Sri Dhirendra Thirtha's incident, Sri Raghavendraswami gives us the message that he also is present in his Brindavana in the same physical form as at the time of his entry into it.

It may be recalled here that when it was not known where Sri Jayaramachar was camping and Sri Raghavendra was prayed to from Poona, the Swami appeared in the dream of Sri Jayaramachar who was then at Kumbakonam and sent him to Sri Varadendra. Such is the power and benevolence of Sri Raghavendra!

One should therefore visit Mantralaya at least once to have darshan of the Brindavana in which Sri

Raghavendraswami is still alive. Those who are not in a position to go there should at least pray to him from the depth of their hearts and seek his blessings.

Sri Raghavendra is always in readiness to grace his devotees. He will never fail to extend his benediction to those who pray wholeheartedly and with unwavering faith in him.

The inquisitiveness exhibited by my daughter in all her innocence has kindled my interest and motivated me to delve into the available information on this incident that has been presented here in an unalloyed manner.

An important aspect that requires keen attention here is that Sri Bhuvanendra, who had fixed the auspicious date and time for changing the resting place of Sri Dharendra Thirtha and the consecration of the new Brindavana, could not be present for the sacred event and was not in a position to be there till its completion. Not only that, he also misses a chance of having darshan of Sri Raghavendra in person - an opportunity given to him at his request that could not fructify. In the process, Sri Bhuvanendra could only have a glimpse of the saffron clothing of the Swami!

It needs to be mentioned here that not all those who had lived during the mundane existence of Sri Raghavendraswami could have had the good fortune of having his darshan and that it would have been possible only to those specially blessed for that grace.

Likewise, although it is a long time since Sri Raghavendraswami had entered his Brindavana, still here are many who are blessed with his darshan, even now.

This leads us to the question why Sri Bhuvanenc had been denied the privilege of having Swam darshan, particularly when he had occupied the exalted seat that Sri Raghavendra himself had adorned in the past - in other words, whether he had not deserved that grace.

And as a corollary, the question arises why Raghavendra had not extended that grace to Bhuvanendra.

The reason behind this will be analysed after delving into an incident involving Sri Bhuvanendra, in the chapter that follows.

## **SRI BHUVANENDRA ESPIES ONLY THE SAFFRON CLOTH OF SRI RAGHAVENDRA**

Matmari is a village near Mantralaya. Numerous devotees from that place visit Mantralaya, even to this day. Benagappa was one such devotee, who was often visiting the holy place. The word Benaga means Ganapathi (or Vinayaka).

It was the routine for Benagappa to be present at Mantralaya every Thursday, for the darshan of Gururaja. He had made it a habit to worship Raghavendra on that day, irrespective of other engagements.

Sri Raghavendra was greatly impressed by the devotion of Benagappa, who was visiting Mantralaya and worshipping him on Thursdays for a number

years, without any break. In consequence, he was giving him darshan every week and delighting him with the enjoyment of that rare privilege. Benagappa would therefore be eagerly awaiting the dawn of Thursday and at times be present in Mantralaya, even by the previous night.

Once, Benagappa told his acquaintances in the village about the rare darshan that Sri Raghavendra was giving him and his experiences of having oral communication with the saint. From then onwards, people started telling their problems to Benagappa and in turn he was placing them before Sri Raghavendra for his advice and grace. And whatever the saint told, was duly passed on to those who had sought his grace.

Soon, news about the strange interaction reached the ears of Sri Bhuvanendra who was then the head of the Sri Mutt. As a result, the pontiff, on the next occasion when Benagappa met him for his blessings, chose to ask him frankly about the rare darshan of the Swami that Benagappa was having every week.

‘Benagappa, it is heard that Sri Gururaja is giving darshan to you in person, is it true?’

‘Yes, Swami. The exalted person is gracing my humble self with his darshan before me, every week.’

‘It appears you are placing the problems of others before the Guru and passing on his advice to the persons concerned?.....’

‘Yes Swami, it is also true. I do not let go any opportunity to ask such things, whenever I am graced by his darshan.’

'You will have to render a help to me, will you (that?.....'

'Me helping you, Swami?.....'

'Yes, Benagappa.....'

'Please tell me, Swami. I am waiting for such a opportunity and am only too eager to fulfil that desire yours.'

'Next time, when Sri Rayaru gives you darshan, you will have to speak to him on my behalf.'

'What are you telling me Swami! You are the one adorning the seat that Sri Raghavendra had glorified for his occupancy and you want me to speak to him for your sake!.....'

'Yes, Benagappa! I am too eager to have darshan of the Swami. You will have to tell him this.'

Benagappa was dumbfounded, on hearing this.

'I say, why are you not responding?.....'

'I shall place your request before Sri Rayaru Swami,' said Benagappa and left for his village, after paying respects to the peetadhipathi.

Benagappa was overwhelmed by the thought that he was to talk to the Swami on behalf of no less a person than the pontiff of the Sri Mutt and was eagerly waiting for the following Thursday.

Sri Bhuvanendra too, like Benagappa, was awaiting the momentous occasion, with avidity and expectation.

Came the next Thursday! Benagappa was present at Mantralaya and Sri Raghavendra made hi

appearance before him, as usual. This time, Benagappa placed the request of Sri Bhuvanendra before Gururaja.

But the response of Sri Rayaru left Benagappa dispirited and as such he approached Sri Bhuvanendra with great hesitancy.

‘Come Benagappa, I was waiting for you only’.

‘.....’

‘Did Rayaru give you his darshan?’

‘Yes, he gave.....’

‘Did you tell him about my yearning?’

‘Yes, I apprised him, Swami.....’

‘What did Rayaru tell you?’

‘.....’

‘What has he told, please let me know, whatever it was.....’

‘He has told that he considered it was not necessary to give you his darshan, Swami.’

‘Please tell me everything in detail, Benagappa.’

‘I told him, “His holiness is too eager to have your darshan and your grace is sought for that”.’

‘How did he react to that?’

‘He said, “Benagappa! Till now you have been telling me about the problems of others and I have been giving the necessary advice. Are you now asking me to give darshan to another person also?” I did not leave the matter there and made it known to him that the request

was from your holiness. But he said, "This is not the time for giving darshan to him",' concluded Benagappa.

'Is it so ....,' exclaimed Sri Bhuvanendra and after regaining his composure added, 'Alright Benagappa, you may go now.' But, from then onwards the pontiff could not take his thoughts away from Sri Raghavendra.

The following week, when Benagappa came there, Sri Bhuvanendra told him, 'Benagappa, please ask Gururaja again, on my behalf.'

The devotee from Matmari also did not leave the issue aside and when he had the darshan of Sri Raghavendra, passed on the request to the Swami, urging him for that grace.

'Gururaja, you must give darshan to Sri Bhuvanendra. Otherwise, it may appear that whatever I have been asking you and conveying to others (as from you) are only imaginary. At least to make others give credence to it, you should grace his holiness, the pontiff, with your appearance before him.'

'Alright, Benagappa. I shall give darshan to Bhuvanendra, but on one condition....'

'Please tell me, Swami.'

'Next time when you come for my darshan, let Bhuvanendra also sit by your side....'

'It will be done accordingly, Swami. But you mentioned something about a condition....'

'You should not, under any circumstances, speak to Bhuvanendra when he is sitting beside you....'

‘It will most certainly be complied with, Swami.....’

‘But if by chance you speak to him at that time, you will not have the grace of my darshan thenceforth...are you agreeable to this?....’

‘Yes, I agree to it, Swami. If you grace Sri Bhuvanendra with your darshan, that would give immense satisfaction to me, Swami,’ said Benagappa and thereafter proceeded to meet Sri Bhuvanendra.

‘What happened this time, Benagappa?....’

‘Gururaja has agreed to give darshan to you, Swami.’

‘Oh, is it true? If so, you come here on Wednesday itself, next week.’

‘He will give darshan to me on Thursday only, Swami...’

‘I am telling this with some reason. You come on Wednesday itself.’

‘I shall do that, Swami,’ said Benagappa and returned to his place.

It was Wednesday!

Benagappa had come to Mantralaya, even as Sri Bhuvanendra was doing the Moola Rama Puja. He met the Guru after the usual Mangalarathi, followed by the partaking of Thirtha prasad.

‘Benagappa, tonight, after all the sevas are over, we should sit before the Brindavana of Sri Raghavendra, after taking our bath...’



‘Why at night itself, Swami?.’

‘Has he not told that he will give darshan to me on Thursday?’

‘Yes, please.’

‘Thursday commences after midnight, is it not?’

‘Quite true, Swami.’

Accordingly, late in the night that day, both Benagappa and Sri Bhuvanendra took their bath and sat before the Brindavana of Sri Raghavendra, with namas marked on their foreheads.

As time passed, both had their gazes fixed at the Brindavana and without batting an eyelid, were eagerly expecting the appearance of Sri Raghavendraswami from there. With minutes ticking into hours, Sri Bhuvanendra was feeling weary and drowsy, his eyes closing now and then, momentarily.

Benagappa thought of telling, ‘Swami, you should be watchful and keep yourself awake,’ but refrained from talking, lest he be deprived of Sri Raghavendra’s darshan, for non-adherence to the condition he had agreed to. With this in mind, Benagappa had his eyes fixed at the Brindavana, avoiding any kind of distraction.

It was the wee hour!

Benagappa somehow had the feeling that Sri Bhuvanendra was asleep even in the sitting posture that he was at that time. He was therefore in a state of perplexity as to what he should do next.





Soon, there was a blinding flash from the Brindavana and Sri Raghavendra made his appearance out of it!

Sri Bhuvanendra was still asleep and Benagappa could do little about it. His heart ached at the thought that with great difficulty and persuasion, such a rare opportunity was made available to Sri Bhuvanendra, but that it was being frittered away in a quaint manner. Sri Raghavendra, in the meanwhile, proceeded to the Tungabhadra for his early morning ablutions. Sri Bhuvanendra however continued to be in deep slumber at that time.

After some time, Sri Raghavendra returned from the Tungabhadra. Benagappa who was in a quandary at that time, did something strange, consoling himself that there should be nothing wrong in doing such a thing under the extraordinary situation present then.

Yes, he shook Sri Bhuvanendra to wake him up, thinking that Sri Raghavendra had only warned against talking to the pontiff, but that there should be nothing amiss in drawing his attention in some other way. But, Sri Bhuvanendra failed to wake up, even then.

Sri Raghavendra was slowly approaching the Brindavana...

Benagappa thought at that point that there was no purpose in wasting precious moments any further and as such burst out loudly, 'Swami, open your eyes, Sri Raghavendra is about to enter the Brindavana. Please have his darshan now,' nudging the pontiff on his person. And by the time Sri Bhuvanendra woke up, Sri

Raghavendra was just getting inside the Brindavana and lo, the pontiff could get only a glimpse of the saffron cloth of Sri Raghavendra!

In consequence of this, poor Benagappa could not have darshan of Sri Raghavendra from the following week, for having transgressed the condition put forth by Sri Gururaja.

We may now analyse what occurs in our mind, on knowing about this incident.

We would undoubtedly feel sad that Benagappa, who was well-intentioned and only too eager to help Sri Bhuvanendra to have darshan of Sri Gururaja, should have thenceforth missed the grace of his darshan (that he was wont to having every week), arising out of an impediment ascribable to the pontiff. And such thought is justifiable too.

But, we have to look at the whole episode from a different perspective.

While numerous devotees would have come to Mantralaya every week on Thursdays, for darshan of Sri Raghavendra, why is it that Benagappa alone had an extraordinary grace that had not been extended to others?

We have not known anything special about Benagappa, except that he was a regular visitor to Mantralaya every week for Swami's Brindavana darshan.

And for that, should he be graced with Swami's

one chosen to place before Sri Raghavendra the problems of others and act as a medium to pass on advice and blessings (from the Swami) to those concerned?

A few may ponder as to why Sri Raghavendra could not have done all these by making his personal appearance before those having such problems.

Yes, there is certainly an element of logic in such thinking.

If it is contended that the darshan given to Benagappa was improper, then, by the same token, any sympathy for him on account of his missing that grace later, is also a misplaced one. And in a dilemma like this, how should one rationalize these happenings?

Perhaps, one may conclude from this that Sri Raghavendra prefers to give darshan to an ordinary devotee, than to a peetadhipathi occupying the seat he had adorned, if such thinking be satisfying one's conscience.

But, if the real cause behind this episode is analysed, it would indeed be most enthralling, leaving us wondering whether it was for that reason Sri Raghavendraswami had chosen to act in that particular manner.

We shall examine this in the next chapter and enjoy knowing about the mysterious powers and greatness of Sri Raghavendra, in the true manner of their revelation.

## **A MEANINGFUL BLESSING TO BENAGAPPA**

We have seen in the last chapter that Sri Bhuvanendra had been extended only the grace of just catching a glimpse of Sri Raghavendra's saffron cloth, as the saint was entering the Brindavana.

The incident relating to Sri Bhuvanendra clearly reveals that Sri Raghavendra, even long after his Brindavana pravesha, goes to the Tungabhadra early in the morning every day, for his ablutions. As in Part I, more about the mysterious deeds of Sri Raghavendra in the Tungabhadra are covered later on, in this writing.

We learn from the Benagappa episode that even today Sri Raghavendra gives his darshan to a chosen few, just as he had appeared in person before Thomas Munroe.

While so, one would rather feel distressed that Sri Bhuvanendra should have been the cause for Benagappa losing the grace of Sri Raghavendra's darshan, leading one to the question whether it is not inappropriate in the related circumstances.

On a deeper analysis, it could however be seen that Sri Bhuvanendra had not only missed seeing Gururaja in person, but had likewise been unable to participate in the consecration ceremony of Sri Dhirendra's Brindavana (when the mortal remains of the saint were shifted to another place, five years after his entombment), although Sri Bhuvanendra himself had fixed the auspicious date and time for it, while at Poona.

In fact, even if Sri Bhuvanendra should have been present on that occasion, he could not have had darshan of Sri Dhirendra, as it is the custom of the Sri Mutt to restrain it on age-old conventions.

Yes, if monkhood has been granted to a disciple during the pontificate of a saint or even if conferred after the attainment of mukti by the head of the Sri Mutt, the anointed one is precluded from having darshan of the one who has attained mukti. The successor pontiff can (as per the custom), perform arathi, only to the feet of his Guru, who has attained mukti. In such an event, except the feet to be worshipped, the other parts of the body of the deceased pontiff will be screened from the vision of the successor to the peeta and the arathi can be performed, only after such concealment.

Sri Bhuvanendra had performed such ritual for Sri Dhirendra and obviously he could not have done the same again. It would appear that this was the plausible cause for his absence at the consecration ceremony of the new Brindavana for Sri Dhirendra.

It was Sri Venkateshachar, the purvashrama grandson of Sri Sujayeendra Thirtha (through his daughter), who gave me the foregoing elucidation and those that follow later in continuation of this episode.

After writing this work, I have, for more than six months, read out the matter to people who are devotees of Sri Raghavendraswami, as also to those known to belong to his lineage.

Sri Venkateshachar was the last person to whom this compilation had been read out, before its going to the



press. Though young, he is endowed with abundant wisdom and knowledge. He is a storehouse of facts about Sri Raghavendra and the Sri Mutt and could better be described as a computer that provides all the information, as and when required. He is quick to point out the finer points of any narrative, apart from the shortcomings that require attention and corrective steps.

I have been of the opinion that even catching a glimpse of the saffron cloth of Sri Raghavendra is like having his darshan (its mysterious power having been fathomed in Part I). In the same way, it has been my contention that Sri Raghavendraswami considered giving darshan to an ordinary devotee to be more important than appearing before one occupying the peeta adorned by him and that Sri Bhuvanendra, though seemingly asleep, would have in fact had darshan of the saint in his mind's eye, the closure of his eyes having been an outward manifestation of a state of deep meditation at that point of time (though Benagappa could have thought otherwise about it). Sri Venkateshachar agreed with my reasoning, without any demur.

But he gave also a new explanation, citing a story handed down for generations. In addition, he elucidated why Benagappa had enjoyed the special grace of Sri Raghavendra. We shall see those now.

First the story:

There was a person who was cutting wood from a forest and eking out his livelihood from its sale.

Once there was heavy rain all around, but the woodcutter, despite adverse conditions, laboured hard to gather dry wood from the forest, to earn his bread.

The rain was not abating even after some days, but when the skies did clear up, there was only damp wood available for felling, which would not go even for a song. But the woodcutter still started on his errand, with an axe.

There was a small temple like structure in the forest, built of wood, and in it was a forest Goddess, carved in wood.

That day, when it caught the woodcutter's attention, he went towards the Goddess. And as she was not rain soaked, but dry as a bone, he was preparing to axe her into pieces. With a sense of happiness that his family can have food for the day, he raised his axe to chop her off (as for him it was only dry wood and not a Goddess). And lo, an ethereal voice was heard then.

The voice said, 'Dear one, why are you axing me?'

'Yes, I have to cut wood and earn for my daily bread.'

'You want money, is it not?'

'Yes, please....'

'Look, I shall be dropping two coins before me. Take them and satisfy your hunger,' said the voice and in an instant the coins were there for the asking.

As the woodcutter picked up the coins with great eagerness, the voice told him, 'Dear one, if you come here like this daily, I shall continue to present you such coins.'

'Most happily' said the woodcutter and ran from there in great joy.

Later, he made it a habit of going to the forest daily (without his axe), to return with the coins proffered by the forest Goddess.

As days passed, the woodcutter started telling everyone about the good fortune that he was enjoying through the blessings of the forest Goddess.

Green with jealousy, the next door man thought one day why he should not follow suit. In fact, his friend going to the forest without the axe, but being a lot better off, kindled the greed within him. Truly, what a change it was from carrying head loads of wood for vending in the streets and the comfortable life blessed by the forest Goddess!

He therefore went to the woods with an axe, wondering about the mysterious power of the forest Goddess.

And there, as he raised his axe to fell the Vana Devata (forest Goddess), an unknown voice drew his attention, calling him, 'Dear one'.

At this, the avaricious person who had raised the axe, lowered his hand suddenly, with the fond expectation that the voice would tell him, 'Why are you cutting me, you want only money, is it not?'

And so it happened, the incorporeal voice echoing 'Dearie, why have you thought of cutting me - it is only for money, is it not?'

‘Yes, please...’

‘You know, is it not, that I am the Goddess of the forest?’

‘Yes, since long.’

‘So you know me and yet, can you think of cutting me to pieces? Your neighbour, wanting some dry wood, ventured to cut me for earning his bread - not knowing who I am. But you have knowledge about me and also you are not in such dire circumstances as having to cut me for earning your daily food. Therefore, I shall not give you any coins. Likewise, your neighbour too will not have the privilege that he was blessed to enjoy all these days and he should henceforth earn his bread only by the sweat of his brow.’ And this was reportedly the last message heard from the unknown source.

Sri Bhuvanendra had in plenty the grace of Sri Raghavendra and that is why he had the rare privilege of sitting on the venerable seat Sri Gururaja had occupied as the head of the Sri Mutt, during his earthly existence. He had been blessed also to perform the Moola Rama puja that Sri Raghavendra himself was doing. Apart from these, as a spiritually exalted person, it was not necessary for Sri Bhuvanendra to have darshan in person of Guru Raghavendra, unlike Benagappa, the commoner. With his spiritual wisdom, Sri Bhuvanendra had in abundance the power of having darshan of Sri Raghavendra through his mind’s eye and his indulgence in it cannot be doubted at all.

Benagappa too was undoubtedly enjoying the blessings of Sri Raghavendra, but it was only when he

tried to tell others about the darshan that the Swami was giving him, that he lost the grace of the saint's appearance before him. Still, it requires examination how Benagappa had that rare privilege for so long. Yes, there is a hidden reason for it.

We have seen about Sri Appannacharya's episode in Part I. To recaitulate it, he was a beloved disciple of Sri Raghavendra, who had gone to a place away from Mantralaya on some errand of the Sri Mutt, before the Brindavana pravesha of Sri Raghavendraswami. On the eventful day, despite running fast towards Mantralaya, Sri Appannacharya found the Tungabhadra to be in full fury and in his distress he prays to Sri Raghavendra. Chanting the stotra beginning, 'Sri Poornabodha Guru Thirtha Payobdhi para...' he steps into the water of the river. And lo, as he puts his foot into the river, the waters make way for him! But alas, he is late in reaching the Brindavan spot, as everything was over by then. Sri Appannacharya cries in great agony then for having missed the last darshan of the saint.

And Benagappa is none else than Sri Appannacharya reborn - the one who has given to the world the famous lines 'Poojyaya Raghavendraya Satya Dharma Rathaya Cha, Bhajatam Kalpavrukshaya namatam Kamadhenave.'

Although Sri Raghavendra had not given darshan to Appannacharya in person, his voice from the Brindavana had blessed him with the words, 'Sakshi naya syothrahi...' (concluding the stanza that the grief-stricken Appannacharya could not complete when he had arrived at the Brindavana).

But as Benagappa, he had the grace of Swami's darshan every week - to recompense what he had missed as Appannacharya at the time of the Brindavana pravesha of Sri Raghavendraswami.

It is universal that there must be an end to anything and it was for this reason Sri Raghavendraswami enacted a drama through Sri Bhuvanendra and discontinued giving his darshan.

Benagappa was however unwavering in his devotion and did not stop visiting Mantralaya just because Swami had ceased to give him darshan. As a result, Sri Raghavendra graced him by appearing in his dream, from then onwards (incidentally it is all Swami's grace and benevolence - be it in reality or in dream that he gives his darshan).

In the song, 'Nithya Bidadhe Bhajisi...' composed by Shyama Sundara Dasa, there is a line that runs as, 'Puna Jagati Janisi, Ganapathi Anusaranamava Darisi'- the reference to Ganapathi therein pointing to none else than Benagappa. Incidentally, it may be recalled here that in the beginning of the previous chapter, it was mentioned in the passing that the word 'Benaga' means 'Ganapathi'.

Likewise, it is said also, 'Yathakke Anumana, Eethane Jatharoopa Sayana! Jathanada Yatinada Sri Rayara Preethipadadha Pithabratharyaru Nija!'

Here, 'Pitha' would refer to Appa (father) and 'bratha' to 'Anna' (elder brother) and 'pithabratharyaru' to Appanna (i.e. Appannacharya).

That Appannacharya has taken rebirth as Benagappa, has been brought out in this composition most exquisitely and in no uncertain terms.

As we move on to the next chapter, we will come across the benevolence extended by Sri Raghavendra in a similar manner to a poor family a few years back.

Indeed, we would be left in amazement, after knowing what the poverty-stricken family had come for and what guidance was given to them by Sri Raghavendraswami (in their dream) and how they were shocked and befuddled by that advice! We will surely be left with misty eyes, when we realize that Sri Raghavendra extends his grace even in such strange ways. Let us delve into them, in the pages that follow.

### **A DREAM THAT BAFFLED A COUPLE!**

There lived a small brahmin family of three - the parents and a daughter. It was a very devout family, but not well off economically. The family had great faith in Sri Raghavendraswami and his supernatural powers.

The girl, being their only offspring, the parents brought her up with utmost care and affection. Even in poverty, the family was virtuous and upright.

When the girl attained the marriageable age, the parents started looking for suitable match for her. They could not find one befitting their status - nor did they have the wealth and finances to get her married off in an affluent family.

Loath to giving their daughter in wedlock to someone not having adequate financial support, they were constantly praying to God for showing them the way to find an acceptable partner for her.

At last, by the grace of the Almighty, they could locate a boy measuring up to the standard they had set in their minds. He had no bad habits and although not having sufficient income, he could at least be relied upon to stand up on his own legs and support the spouse too. An acceptable match no doubt, but still the parents would have to spend beyond what they had on their hand, to perform a decent marriage. Although some household vessels and jewels had been collected with great difficulty, they required at least Rs.10,000/- in cash for the alliance to materialise.

The parents were naturally worried how they could raise an amount of Rs.10,000/-, whether they could approach somebody for a loan and if at all it should be forthcoming, how they could repay it in due course.

When besieged by the anxiety as to whom they should approach and whether anybody would have the mind to help them, it suddenly occurred to them that they could pray to Sri Raghavendra (the Kalpavruksha and Kamadhenu of Kaliyuga) and seek his grace.

Accordingly, they set out to Mantralaya, with their beloved daughter.

At Mantralaya, they took the vow for 'Sankalpa Seva', praying that their daughter's marriage should take place without any obstacles (the daughter also joining them in the ritual).

The girl had heard a friend of her father speaking aloud in their place, 'It is better to make efforts here to raise the amount as a borrowal from some source or the



is Raghavendra going to shower a fortune on them? It will be a wasteful expenditure, going there'. She was naturally upset by this open criticism that was constantly ringing in her ears, causing her great mental agony.

Slowly, her mind started doubting whether their yearning could be fulfilled and the money for it be secured in a short time, by mere devotion and worship that her parents were indulging in. But still, she too engaged herself in the performance of the seva.

While so, the father one day had a dream early in the morning, in which a venerable old man appeared and spoke.

'Appa, when your daughter's marriage is to take place, you need not have to spend your time here....'

'Swami, it is my desire that the marriage should go off well and therefore....'

'An amount of Rs.10,000/- will suffice your needs, is it not?'

'Yes, please. It is enough and if that is available, I can celebrate the marriage to my heart's content.'

'If so, I shall tell you a way and if you act accordingly, you can get the money. Will you do that?'

'Yes, I shall follow the advice, Swami', he said, but was shocked at what he subsequently heard from the old man. And in an instant the girl's father continued, 'I have been upright even in my penurious circumstances, but I cannot do such a thing now, Swami'.

'If so, I leave it to you,' said the old man and disappeared.

The following morning, the father of the girl was in a state of confusion. 'May be such a dream has occurred, because I was constantly engrossed in thoughts about the money. If this is told to others, I may become a laughing stock too. For the sake of money, can one conduct oneself in such a manner?' he introspected and without telling anyone about the dream, started meditating on Sri Raghavendra and worshipping him from his heart.

In the early hours of the next day, his wife too had a dream, the same old man making his appearance.

'Amma, you are doing seva for the successful completion of your daughter's marriage. Yesterday morning, I told your husband the way for it, but he has not acted according to my advice. At least, will you act in the manner I suggest?'

'What is the way suggested, Swami? I have not been told anything by my husband.'

'I shall tell you now. If you do what I suggest, you will get the amount of Rs.10,000/- you have been longing for,' said the old man, repeating what he had told her husband the previous day.

'Oh Swami, what a horrible thing it is? No. I cannot, I cannot do that. My husband has taken the right decision in the matter and I shall follow his footsteps'.

'Alright, if your desire be that way, there is nothing more to it,' said the venerable person and vanished from the scene.

At dawn, the wife discussed her dream with her husband and both thought it to be improper to act in the manner suggested to them.

They then thought that as the Seva was ending that day, it was appropriate to leave for their place the day after the next one, fulfilling the ritual of offering the hastodaka on the following day.

And without informing their daughter about the dream, they just instructed her to be ready to leave for home by the earliest bus the day after the next one. But they were badly upset by what they had been told by the venerable person in their dreams.

Throughout that day, they were ruminating, 'O Raghavendra, is this the way? What a trial is this? Is for this we have come to Mantralaya?'

It was the wee hours of the next day!

The daughter too had a dream!

And the same venerable old man appeared before her!

'Dear child, I told your parents individually, but they have not followed my advice...'

'Oh, what did you tell them Swami, which they have not complied with?'

'I told them the place where the amount of Rs.10,000/- needed for your marriage can be found. I asked them to take it, but they are frightened. You are a young girl. Don't be afraid to comply with what I tell

‘Please tell me, Swami.’

‘You have to follow whatever I advise you to do. There is nothing wrong in it and you should act boldly. Nothing will happen... but don’t entertain any fear.’

‘What shall I do, Swami?’

‘The day you are planning to leave, you must get up early. At a place where I indicate, a devotee of mine will be sleeping with Rs.10,000/- under his headrest. Without making any noise, you should go there and lifting the money from there, you should get back to your place of stay and lie down as before. Later, when your parents wake you up, you start with them for your journey to your home place.’

‘To my parents...’

‘Definitely you must not tell them. They will cause you to change your mind. You could tell them everything, only after reaching your place.’

‘Whatever it may be....’.

‘Don’t worry a bit about this. It is a matter concerning your marriage. Let not such a good chance be lost,’ said the old man and disappeared from there.

It was a little before dawn!

The girl’s conscience was pricking her. But she had not let out anything to her parents.

As usual, she had her bath in the Tungabhadra, worshipped Sri Raghavendra and witnessed the Moola Rama Puja. And after partaking in the Thirtha prasad (the lunch served as God’s prasad), she returned to her

cottage, with her parents. She discussed with her parents about catching an early bus, to return to their place.

But that night she could not sleep at all, her mind being preoccupied with thoughts about what she had been asked to do.

'In a way such an action is justifiable, but not so from a different perspective. But what else to do? I am not going to do it on my own - it is the old man who is instrumental to it. Could it be true that such a devotee has come here? Why not?'

With such thoughts baffling the girl constantly, let us move on to the next chapter!

### **SRI RAGHAVENDRA WHO GAVE MONEY**

It was early in the morning!

The girl got out of her bed and made sure that her parents were fast asleep.

In the dimly lit surroundings, she opened the door of her room silently and came out, closing it gently behind her.

Even in the darkness of the pre-dawn hour, she picked up courage and slowly wended her way to the place revealed to her in her dream.

Soon, she was at the spot and stood there. The door at the place where the devotee was staying, was wide open and without making any sound, she entered

Thinking of Sri Raghavendra and chanting his name, she slowly inched her way towards the bhakta.

As told by the venerable old man, there was a bag near the headrest of the devotee. She took it quietly and when she eyed into it, there was a bundle in it, wrapped in cloth. Taking it out carefully, she replaced the bag in its place and made her exit silently. She was soon back in her place.

Fortunately for her, the parents were still asleep. She therefore opened the cloth covering on the bundle and lo, wads of notes stared in her face! The next instant she wound it again and covered it with a towel, before placing it in her bag. After securing it thus, she was in her bed, as before.

Some time later, her mother tried to wake her up, but she pretended being fast asleep and delayed getting up.

Not long after, they all rose up and finished their ablutions. They then had darshan of Sri Raghavendra and hopped into the first available bus, to journey to their place.

Be that so, the devotee whose bag had been tampered with, woke up from his slumber in a leisurely manner.

Even as he was getting up, he groped for the bag that had been kept near his headrest the previous night. It was found to be not in its original place, but a little away from there. And when it was lifted, he found its weight to have been reduced considerably. In great perplexity, he put his hand in it and instantaneously burst out, 'Oh, Raghavendra'.

He then looked at the door in bewilderment, but found it to be latched inside. He was baffled how the note bundle that had been kept in the bag placed near his headrest, could alone be missing.

‘How can I go and complain about this matter to anyone, venting out my feelings? I had closed the door inside, keeping the money bag near my head, when I went to sleep. In the morning, I find it missing and there is no sign of the door having been opened at night. If these factual occurrences are recounted, what will people think of me? Will they not view it with suspicion?’ agonized the devotee.

Though constantly seized by this thought, he was not bothered about the loss of the money, but concerned only about how it could have vanished. Later, however, he could not overcome the feeling of its loss.

‘Guru Raghavendra, don’t you know what for I had brought that money. If it had been lost in transit, there could be some valid and justifiable reason for it. But in your holy place it has come to be stolen - rather I should not use that word - it has somehow vanished, to put it differently. Don’t you know for how long I have saved that much money and with what devotion I was safeguarding it. All this has been in vain and in one night it has become futile,’ he grieved within himself.

Some time later, he regained his normality and after completing his abultions and morning rituals, approached the pontiff and told him what all had

The Swami, after hearing everything, asked him, 'Appa, is it some time since you came here?'

'Yes please, it is some days....'

'Have you brought that much money for your daily expenses?'

'I have that money separately. This one was for offering to Sri Gururaja,"

'If so, why have you not offered it to Sri Raghavendra, all these days.'

'That is the mistake I have done. If I had given my offering on the day I came, this agony could have been avoided.'

'You have steadfast devotion and belief, is it not?'

'Yes, Swami.'

'If so, there must be some reason for what has happened in the holy place of Sri Gururaja. If you are not satisfied with this, you can lodge a police complaint; there is a police station here.'

"....."

The devotee, who took leave of the pontiff silently, could not divert his attention from the unexpected turn of events. He somehow passed off that day and after much deliberation came to the conclusion that he should leave for his place the very next day.

His mind wavered around the thought whether it was in order for him to continue staying there after such an incident.



‘A police complaint can be lodged, but they will ask for evidence, for everything. There is no such proof of me having brought the cash, nor of its having been kept here.’ With these thoughts the devotee dozed off to sleep.

In his deep slumber, the bhakta had a pleasant dream. Yes, Sri Raghavendra appeared before him, in the dream.

‘Appa, why do you look upset?’

‘The money brought for you is missing, Swami.’

‘You brought it for me only, I suppose.’

‘Yes, Guru...’

‘Knowing it, I have taken it myself’ said the Swami, narrating all that had happened.

‘Oh, Gururaja! What a grace it is for me! If I had hastily dropped the money in the Hundi on the day I had arrived, could I have had this darshan of yours’ - the dream concluding at that point of time.

On the morrow, he told the pontiff of Sri Mutt with great excitement and joy, whatever Sri Rayaru had told him. The chief of the Sri Mutt and others present there became ecstatic and amazed at what they heard.

Some time later, the girl visited Mantralaya most happily after her marriage, accompanied by her life partner and her parents.

This incident that had happened a few years back underscores again the extent of benevolence and grace

There may be some who would ponder whether the Swami could not have helped the family in a different way and if what was caused to be done, was proper. But for everything there is a definite purpose (engineered by the Almighty) that is not apparent to us humans.

Truly, if the bhakta had made the offering in the Hundi on the day of his arrival itself, it would have remained there only, till the opening of the Hundi. And, after the opening of the Hundi, how could Sri Raghavendra have passed on that money to the girl? It could be presumed that only after Sri Raghavendraswami's appearance in the dream of many devotees and his explaining things to them, the amount could have reached the poor parents. Obviously, the marriage could not have been postponed till then.

In the alternative, if Sri Raghavendra should have appeared before the devotee and advised him to give the money to the poor couple, would it have given him the kind of mental satisfaction that normally goes with the offerings made in the Hundi? It may be recalled here that when the King of Thanjavur offered his diamond necklace to Sri Ragavendra and the Swami had put it in the yaga kunda (ritualistic fire), the king's heart had immensely ached at Swami's action. It would not be incorrect to deduce from this that in the incident here Sri Raghavendra has chosen to cause avoidance of such disappointment and agony in the mind of his devotee.

Like the money given here, a true devotee is given food in an episode that left those at the Sri Mutt nonplussed. It is covered in the chapter following this.

## **SRI RAGHAVENDRA'S MIRACLE IN A DEVOTEE'S LUNCH**

Annadhanam (the offering of food to devotees), is as important in Mantralaya as the Moola Brindavana of Sri Raghavendraswami or the Moola Rama puja conducted there.

Except on the Ekadasi day (the eleventh day from the fortnightly lunar cycle) when religious fasting is observed by the Hindu community, on all other days, visitors to Mantralaya are provided with free lunch that signifies the prasad of Sri Raghavendraswami. Unfailingly, on the other days when the ritualistic offering of food is made to Sri Raghavendra (known as Naivedya), the bhaktas are fed sumptuously.

In his purvashrama days as Venkatanatha, the miseries Sri Raghavendra had faced were countless. It was not he alone who suffered those, but even his dutiful wife and beloved son, Lakshminarayana, had to go through all such ordeals.

In Mantralaya, it is only on Ekadasi days that there is no Naivedya (and consequently food for the devotees) but in the purvashrama life of Sri Raghavendraswami (when he was Venkatanatha), he had to starve on most days and satisfy his hunger on those occasions with just the Tulsi water given as Thirtha.

Sri Raghavendra, who had undergone all those hardships, has established the tradition that those

approaching him for his Blessings should not suffer from hunger and in line with it, the pontiffs occupying the peeta of the Sri Mutt, are to this day, carrying out the customary feeding of the devotees, scrupulously and without break.

There was a suggestion at one point of time that food be provided only to those doing sevas like the “Rathothsava seva”, but it was turned down by the pontiff, who was disinclined to change a practice that had been established by Sri Raghavendra.

The main purpose of Annadhanam is to make available to the devotees the prasad of the Almighty that has the power of curing ailments , physical and mental. Devotees come there not only for worshipping Sri Raghavendra and witnessing the grand spectacle of the Moola Rama puja and Mahamangalarathi, but also to partake in the Thirthaprasad (or lunch) provided by the Sri Mutt on a grand scale, that is referred to as Annadhanam in the religious nomenclature.

We eat a variety of victuals at home and consume luxurious food items in parties, but what is it that singles out the Mantralaya prasad? Undoubtedly, it is its Divine power to cure diseases and provide devotees with the sort of contentment that normally eludes one.

Not all devotees visiting Mantralaya enjoy an affordable economic status. In fact, a majority of them being the less fortunate ones, free meal (as Annadhanam) is provided by the Sri Mutt, with the noble idea of not burdening them with food expenses, particularly when they come there for darshan of Sri

Raghavendra from far away places, incurring considerable expenditure for travelling to the holy place.

Generally, those visiting Mantralaya would stay at least for three days, to perform "Sankalpa Seva". The number of days for seva could be even longer and there are instances of devotees having performed seva for months together, nay for even years.

Those who perform "Sankalpa Seva" in the ritualistic and orthodox manner, can daily take one meal only during the period of the Seva. And consuming food not conforming to the orthodox way of life is detestable, particularly after worshipping Sri Raghavendra with deep devotion. Incidentally, this is also a reason for the mutt continuing Annadhanam.

While Annadhanam is extended to all, such prasad is not available at all hours, there being a fixed time for it.

Tokens for food are issued to all those coming out of the holy precincts, after dharshan of the Brindavana. Besides, they are distributed the previous evening also. The purpose of the token system is only to identify the batch, as it is well nigh impossible to accommodate a large number in one single lot. The tokens carry an indication of the batch number and when a particular batch is called, those having that token can go to the allotted dining place and partake in the lunch served there. At times, even when the last batch is being served, visitors who would have just arrived, will still be accommodated.

Those performing “Sankalpa Seva” will never miss their Thirthaprasad, as proper arrangements exist to take care of their needs.

At present, people come to Mantralaya even as tourists. Many a time, they arrive after the lunch time and feel disappointed, if food is not available then. It must be appreciated that Mantralaya is a holy place of pilgrimage and food cannot be provided by the Sri Mutt at odd timings (as in hotels) and that what is made available to devotees is the Divine prasad that carries a lot of sanctity - as such, it must be our aim to have the prasad at the time it is available at the Sri Mutt.

It may not be out of place to mention a few things here, for the benefit of the tourist devotees. If it is a crowded programme for a few days that you are planning, please set apart at least one day for staying at Mantralaya, as a bath in the Tunghabhadra, the Moola Rama puja and the “Rajothsava” (the drawing of the silver chariot) are things that should not be missed. It is suggested that it would be most appropriate if the place is reached early in the morning and departure timed for the night. Otherwise, one should stay at least till the afternoon and leave the place after the Annadhanam (which, as already mentioned, is the lunch served as prasad). But if one should arrive in the afternoon, at least participation in the “Rathothsava” at night should not be missed, as it would be a thrilling experience to witness the event. One should not think that a visit to Mantralaya is just going there, seeing the Brindavan and getting back - rather it is much more than that. It hardly needs emphasis again that the Thirthaprasad of Mantralaya

has the Divine power of curing the maladies in the human system and as such it should not be missed being taken.

It is said that at times, some who could not afford for their daily food have stayed at Mantralaya for a number of days at a stretch, without any anxieties about their sustenance. Many instances like this can be cited in testimony of the infinite compassion and grace that Sri Raghavendraswami is extending to mankind.

Be that so, an ardent devotee of Sri Gururaja came to Mantralaya once. It was well past the time when even the last batch had finished taking lunch and the dining halls were just in the process of being cleaned.

‘Swami, even if I have a few morsels of food, that should suffice my needs. I must return today itself. It is only for having the prasad of Sri Rayaru that I have come with an empty stomach. If I should be staying here, I can have the prasad even tomorrow, but it is not to be so,’ were the thoughts that he wanted to convey to the people looking after the food arrangements, but on seeing the position there he kept quiet and walked away to the prakara (the place surrounding the four sides of the sanctum sanctorum), to have darshan of Sri Raghavendra.

Those who have visited Mantralaya would know that the right side, as also the hind portion of the Brindavana, can be viewed from the prakara. The late comer, who had such darshan of the Brindavana from outside, later walked to the river in scorching sun, placing his foot in long strides on the rocks that were radiating unbearable

heat. And as he walked, he reflected, 'Gururaja, I came here with great expectation and desire, but have missed the grace of having your prasad. Still, I shall witness your procession in silver chariot tonight, before returning to my place. I have no doubt come here several times and taken your prasad, but this time I have to get back immediately. If you had chosen to grace me, I could have been given at least a few morsels of the prasad. I am really at a loss to know what sin I have committed. Surely, when I come here next time, I shall come prepared to stay here for a couple of days. As for today, the holy water of the Tungabhadra (meandering behind your Brindavana), will satisfy my needs. Oh, on how many occasions during your purvashrama life, you have yourself lived on the Tulsi water given as Thirtha. Truly, if even a drop of the sanctified water is taken in meditation of the Almighty, it should be causing contentment.'

On reaching the edge of the river, he took some water in his palm and when he was about to gulp it, he heard somebody calling him, 'Appa'.

Looking around, he could see an old man standing there, holding a plate in his hands, with a cloth covering it.

'I say, why are you looking famished and exhausted? Have you not had your food?', he asked of the visitor to the holy place.

'Swami, how did you come here? I did not find you walking behind me or even moving ahead of me.....'

'Oh, I was here only, dear one.....'



‘Perhaps, my view was obstructed by this boulder.’

‘Yes, something was blinding your vision. Be that so, please hold this plate,’ said the old man.

The devotee then took the plate and held it in his hands.

‘It is for you only...sit in that shade and see what it contains....’

‘Swami, I request you also to come with me.’

‘Yes, I am ready for that’, the old man said and walked with him.

The devotee then removed the cloth on the plate and found a plaintain leaf covering its contents. And as soon as it was also taken off, a further surprise awaited him! For, the plate contained a variety of delicacies, rice preparations, side dishes, sweets and what not!

‘All these....?’

‘Yes, they are for you only, please have them.....’.

‘How about you, are you not going to share these....’

‘First, you take them You are hungry, later you can do the talking.’

‘I wanted to have the prasad of Sri Rayaru....’

‘This is also the confines of Rayaru. You are not to pay for this food. I just thought of providing it to you and I expect you to consume it without any demur, giving respect to my age.’

‘That is not the thing Swami, I wanted to have only

‘This is also the food of Sri Mutt and I leave it to your pleasure.....’

The devotee, with all eagerness, consumed the food to his heart’s content.

‘Appa, you have to extend a small help to me.’

‘What is it, Swami?’

‘You must wash this plate and see that it reaches its place. If there is any inconvenience to you, I do not expect you to do it....’

‘Like God, you have come to my succour and removed my distress, giving me the mental solace that I needed. If I do not help you even that much.....’ So saying, the devotee cleaned the plate in the running water and to his amazement realized then that it was a silver plate that he had in his hands.

‘Swami, this looks like a silver plate and I had not noticed it while eating.’

‘Yes, it is. Will you please hand it over safely to the person I indicate?’

‘By all means, Swami’ he said and hastened to the Brindavana of Sri Raghavendraswami, as directed by the old man. There he met the priest who was coming out of the place indicated to him and handed the plate to him. The priest, after examining it closely, ran with the plate to the prakara. And from there, he espied the Brindavana and immediately felt a chillness passing through his body. He then impulsively stared at the person who had handed the plate.

The bhakta, realising that there was something serious, raised his eyebrows in perplexity and turned his look towards the priest.

‘Do you know the importance of this plate?’ the priest asked the visitor.

‘No please, I am not aware.’

‘How did you get this?’ he asked further and when the devotee told everything, the priest was astounded and felt delighted at the happenings.

‘Appa, it was in this plate we had kept the Naivedya for Sri Raghavendraswami. I was therefore baffled how it could have come into your hands, when, after completing the puja and other rituals, we had all come out, securely locking behind us the sanctum sanctorum of the Brindavana. In response to your earnest prayer, Swami has graced you with the Naivedya that had been offered to him - that too he has come to you in person and proffered it to you. Oh, what a blessed soul you are! ...’ said the priest, leaving the devotee highly excited and in a state of exuberance that is beyond description.

To those with steadfast devotion towards him, Sri Raghavendra graces in unthinkable ways. To enjoy such grace, intense bhakti is necessary. Needless to say that keeping this incident in mind, one should not entertain the craving for having his grace by being late for the Annadhanam and proceeding towards the river to gulp the running water there, in expectation of the Swami making available the Naivedya (in the manner he has

The devotee who had the grace of the Swami had often been visiting Mantralaya and was ever prayful to him. That is why Sri Raghavendra has graced him, as he would seldom allow a devotee seeking his blessings, to starve and suffer physically, as also experience the mental agony resulting therefrom.

For feeding the devotees at Mantralaya, rice and provisions are being received there as offering from various places, even from the time of Sri Raghavendraswami.

Sri Gururaja gets whatever he wants, through his devotees. Even if millions are offered, Sri Raghavendra will accept such offering, only if satisfied about it.

In fact, he has appeared in the dream of another devotee and demanded of him the offering of a paltry sum of Rs.15/-, even as there are numerous devotees vying with each other every day to make large contributions in cash and kind to the Sri Mutt.

Strangely, the person to whom Sri Raghavendra had made that demand, was in a position to give any amount, but what was expected as offering from him was only Rs.15/- and that too for a holy purpose. We shall scan this incident now!

### **A PALTRY AMOUNT DEMANDED OF A WEALTHY ONE**

Udipi always brings to one's mind the well-known Sri Krishna temple there. Udipi Krishna is famed in

of Gopichandana (a special kind of hardened clay, known for its religious sanctity). It was also Madhwacharya, who was instrumental in the establishment of eight different monastic orders in Udipi and initiating the daily worship of Sri Krishna there, in a grand style. Even today, each of the heads of the eight mutts takes up the responsibility of conducting in a befitting manner the daily pujas to Sri Krishna, on a rotational basis. The handing of this responsibility from one mutt to another every two years (known as Paryaya) is celebrated in the religious way with great splendour and is very popular, drawing huge crowds.

Just as Udipi has become renowned by the name Krishna that follows it, hotels and eateries bearing reference to Udipi, are famous everywhere.

Udipi hotels have a celebrity of their own and the tasty food provided by them, as also the standard of their service, are truly unmatched in excellence.

In most Udipi hotels, Sri Udipi Krishna and Sri Raghavendraswami are venerated and worshipped in the business premises and those running the Udipi hotels have great devotion towards the saint of Mantralaya.

Sri Krishna Bhat was one such devotee, who was running a Udipi hotel. His eatery was in Vijayawada in the Gandhinagar area, known by the name Udipi Lunch Home. Sri Bhat was an ardent worshipper of Sri Raghavendra, but was a depressed person, because his craving for Sri Raghavendra's darshan had not been

However, early in the morning of 22.7.1968, his yearning fructified.

Yes, Sri Krishna Bhat had a dream in the wee hours, in which Sri Raghavendraswami appeared before him in all his resplendence - that too for making a submission to Krishna Bhat - leaving him greatly excited.

As directed in the dream, the devotee sends a money order for Rs.15/- as his offering to the Sri Mutt, on the same day.

At Mantralaya, money Order No.2807 is received on 29.7.1968, the Money Order coupon bearing a narration that the amount has been remitted, as revealed in a dream.

‘Gururaja, I can definitely offer more. Can I send more, Swami?’

‘Appa, it is not necessary. Through you there is something to be accomplished and only Rs.15/- is required for that. And that is sufficient now.’

‘Swami, I am prepared to do any service.....’

‘Knowing your desire and to efface your gloom and disappointment, I am giving you darshan now. I don’t expect money from my devotees. I only look for purity of mind and heart. After all, whatever is offered by bhaktas, goes back to them only!’ Krishna Bhat was thinking of all those that he had witnessed in his dream, rejoicing at the experience.

Yes, Sri Gururaja, to grace his beloved devotees, will appear in any manner and besides giving them darshan, will perform something mysterious too.

A question may arise whether the Sri Mutt was not having Rs.15/- for a Divine purpose, as devotees offer in thousands every day, following the darshan of his Brindavana and experiencing his supernatural powers and grace. When so, why was such a paltry sum demanded by Sri Raghavendra? Obviously, it was only to grace the devotee and fulfil his heart's desire (viz. giving him the darshan that he had been praying for), that Sri Raghavendra had caused such strange things to happen.

While so, the staff members of the Sri Mutt were in a fix as to how the Money Order amount remitted by Sri Krishna Bhat was to be accounted for in their books. If it was intended for the Hundi or performance of some seva, it could have been given proper disposal. Otherwise, in the absence of instructions too, it could have been accounted for as an offering in the Hundi. But the Money Order had not been sent that way and on the contrary, it mentioned that the amount be used for the purpose required by the Sri Mutt, as enlightened by Sri Raghavendra in a dream.

The disciples at the Sri Mutt were therefore left wondering what for it could be and had no qualm that Sri Gururaja's design had some definite purpose behind it.

This incident happened during the period Sri Jayeendra Thirtha was the chief of the Mutt. And when apprised of this, he confidently told everyone present there, that Sri Raghavendra himself would show the way soon. True to his pronouncement, the Gordian knot was soon untied, to the amazement of everyone.

Yes, a silver bell of the Brindavana was found to have developed some defect and when the silversmith was called and asked what it would cost to repair it, he said Rs.15/- spontaneously.

‘Oh, the amount sent by Krishna Bhat from Vijayawada, could only be for this,’ thought everyone in the Sri Mutt, in great wonderment and with a sense of relief that the dilemma about the accounting of the Money Order amount received, had also been cleared up.

Sri Raghavendra, who had graced Krishna Bhat by directing him to send a remittance of Rs.15/- to the Sri Mutt, gives darshan to another devotee, who was not well off economically. He tells him to take a thing that was beyond his means (as an offering to the Sri Mutt) and to deliver it at the Mutt.

The poor devotee says that it was something out of his reach, but Sri Raghavendra tells him the way for it.

In the incident covered in this chapter, Sri Rayaru asks Krishna Bhat to send just Rs.15/-. But in this episode, he asks an ordinary devotee to take a particular item as an offering and to hand it over at Mantralaya.

The devotee thinks why Sri Raghavendra is entrusting the job to him even after he had pleaded his inability, but in the end sheds tears of joy at the grace extended to him by the Guru.

This wonderful event is one connected with the Sri Mutt and the handling of its finances, which had taken place about three decades ago. Let us see it next.





## **A DEVOTEE GRACED BY INADEQUATE BUDGETING**

Expenditure budgeting is an yearly exercise in the Sri Mutt at Mantralaya. In a particular year, an amount of Rs.650/- had to be reduced in the annual estimates and therefore an item of expenditure pertaining to the Aradhana celebrations was pruned in the budget of that year.

While those involved in the preparation of the budget were gloating over their having done a perfect job of it, they were ignorant that they had cut the spending in respect of an important item.

The budget was however approved.

Later, when it was read out to the pontiff, he was perturbed that the item left out from the budget was something used for Gururaja during the chariot seva. With a sense of great disappointment he lamented, 'Oh, what an indiscretion it is! Should this be the fate of a thing to be used for Sri Raghavendra?'. However, in an instant, he found solace in the thought that Sri Rayaru himself will show the way for getting it.

And it was only when the Swami gave vent to his feelings that those in the Sri Mutt could realise the seriousness of what they had omitted as an inconsequential item of expenditure. They could not at that time think of any way of rectifying the position and prayed that Sri Gururaja only should come to their

The chief of the Sri Mutt too was thinking at that time, 'Gururaja, whatever happens is not without your knowledge. It is indeed strange that you should have caused the expenditure cut for something that is used every year (during the Aradhana festivities), to decorate you.'

As the pontiff was rambling in these thoughts, it was announced that a devotee from Shimoga had arrived there to see the Swami.

His name was Rama Rao and after offering his obeisances to the Swami, he placed a packet before him.

'What does this contain, please?'

'It contains an item that I obtained and brought here, under instructions from Sri Gururaja.'

'I am asking you what it is.'

Rama Rao then opened the packet and as soon as its content was revealed, everyone, including the chief of the Sri Mutt, was left stunned and speechless!

'Gururaja! Even if we are careless, you will not miss anything. The item which we had overlooked and were feeling sad about having omitted, you are presenting before us through a devotee. This only strengthens the belief that you instantly remove the sorrows of those who are worshipful towards you and ever thoughtful about you.' So thinking, the chief of the Mutt asked the visitor, 'Appa, why have you brought this here?'

'I have already told you, Swami, that it is under

‘What did he tell you? What happened in reality Have you got it yourself?’

‘Although I have brought it here, it was given to me by another person, Swami. He was made to part with it as enlightened in a dream that I had...’

‘Appa, please tell everything in detail.’

‘Yes, Swami! I shall narrate everything. I am an ardent devotee of Sri Raghavendraswami, always meditating about him. I often used to feel frustrated that when Sri Gururaja has been giving darshan to so many in different ways and under bizarre circumstances, why such grace has been missed by me.’

‘Did he, at last, give you his darshan?’

‘Yes, Swami. He did give such darshan in my dream. He said, “Rama, you have to render a small help to me.” I said, “I have always been praying for such an opportunity only, Gururaja.”’

‘What did he tell further?’

‘Rama! In this year’s budget, an expenditure of Rs.1,250/- for a thing usually purchased for my Vradhana, has been pruned by Rs.650/-. You have to therefore take the item to the mutt,” he said. I told him Swami, you know that I cannot afford that much of expenditure,” but he responded with the observation “Did I ask you to buy it? I only wanted you to go to the place of its origin and to take it from there to the Sri Mutt”’.

‘Oh, did you go to Elandur?’

‘Yes, Swami. I went there and told the matter to Elandur Narasinga Rao. And he became very jubilant

when I apprised him that Sri Raghavendra had enlightened me in a dream that I should arrange with him for its being supplied to the Sri Mutt, as the expenditure for it has been reduced by Rs.650/- in this year's budget of the mutt.'

'Naturally, he must have felt happy about it.'

'Accordingly, it was got done most exquisitely by the workers specially engaged for the purpose and was handed to me on its completion. My eyes became misty, with tears of joy blinding my vision, when I marvelled about the grace extended to me by Sri Raghavendra!'

'If so, Sri Gururaja must have told you all these, at the time the budget was reduced - is it not?'

'From what you say, it appears to be so. Till I came here, I was thinking that whatever I saw in my dream was only a sort of illusion. But my arrival here at the exact time when you were talking about it, is ascribable to Sri Gururaja's grace only.'

'I am very happy about all the happenings. You should also remain here and participate in the Aradhana celebrations.'

'As you suggest, Swami....' said Rama Rao and after offering obeisances to the Guru, shed tears of joy before the Brindavana of Sri Raghavendraswami.

'Appa Gururaja, how do you have so much mercy towards me? Really, you don't seem to have any distinction in the status of persons, in showering your blessings. Otherwise, would you have caused this to happen through me? Oh, what an affluent person

Elandur Narasinga Rao is! If you had deemed it fit, you could have appeared before him and enlightened him in the matter. But solely to grace me, a miserable one, you have enacted this drama, to extend your bountiful mercy to me. Oh, your greatness and prowess are truly unique, Gururaja,' reflected Rama Rao in great ecstasy

During that year's Aradhana celebrations, the procession of the deity in the Silver chariot was performed in great splendour and grandeur and the enthusiastic devotees danced in exuberance, hailing Sri Raghavendra and chanting his holy name.

It was only then that Rama Rao noticed the silken attire adorning the idol of Sri Prahladaraja and gazed at it from a close range.

And lo! It was found to be the same silken cloth brought by him that had been used for decorating Sri Prahladaraja!

'Oh, was it in respect of this ornamental vestment that the annual expenditure had been reduced in the budget estimate of the Sri Mutt? And how mysterious! Sri Raghavendra has got it for him through me and blessed me also to have the magnificent darshan of Sri Prahladaraja sporting it!'

Undoubtedly, we would have also marvelled at these lines and felt the same thrill, if we should have been in the position of Shimoga Rama Rao, enjoying such rare privilege.

Truly, Sri Gururaja, through his divine powers, could remove the deficiency felt by the pontiff and fulfil also the

an order for the item, with its suppliers, even before its sanction in the annual expenditure of Sri Mutt.

Sri Raghavendra is watching all that is happening around us. If we worship him with a pure heart, he will give us whatever we need, through somebody or the other, even if we forget about it.

In a like manner, Sri Krishnamurthi Rao of Tirupattur, a devotee of Sri Raghavendra, had some problems in getting his son admitted in a school there. How Sri Raghavendra clears them up, as also another strange experience of the same devotee, are covered in the next chapter.



### **SRI RAGHAVENDRA GRACES THE DEVOUT ONES**

Sri Krishnamurthi Rao, residing at Tirupattur, was the Headmaster of Ulasinattan village school. He would daily travel to Jolarpettai by bus and from there cycle the distance to his school. While returning too, he would ride his bicycle upto Jolarpettai and then take a bus to Tirupattur.

In the midst of this workaday routine, he had to admit his son in the sixth class in the Dominic Xavier High School at Tirupattur. He therefore approached the staff at the school about it, but the negative response that he got in the matter left him dispirited.

'It is very late now... the application forms for the entrance test have already been given and even the last date for receiving the completed forms ends by tomorrow,' was the discouraging reply that he had.

The person, whom Sri Krishnamurthi Rao had approached, further indicated, 'You could, however, come here tomorrow and represent the matter to the Headmaster, but he is a very strict man,' in a manner that did not inspire any confidence.

Sri Rao, faced with no other alternative, prayed within himself, 'Guru Raghavendra, things have gone beyond control now and whatever you deem fit, let it happen so,' as he wended his way to the place of his residence.

At home, when the disappointing news was broken to his family members, his son Raj Mohan was not at all upset about it and on the contrary said with great assurance and spontaneity, 'Appa! Guru Raghavendra will definitely get me a seat in that school.'

'Tomorrow is the last day and we don't have even the application form.'

'Everything will be looked after by Sri Gururaja and he will definitely see that it ends well,' was the steadfast belief exhibited by the son that left Sri Krishnamurthi Rao in a state of perplexed delight.

And on the morrow, it happened the same way, proving that if with unswerving faith a matter is left to Sri Raghavendra with the confidence that its end will definitely be fruitful, it cannot but be so. In the next chapter also, the episode relating to Kamalakar Joshi bears testimony to this (a person telling this truth with great conviction and things happening the same way).

Be that so, let us now see how Raj Mohan got his

Came the next day and the father of the boy met his acquaintance again. And lo, most unexpectedly , he could at that time get an application form from him! Yet another surprise was that the form was bearing the name "Raghavendran" written on it.

Sri Krishnamurthi Rao was left nonplussed.

'This form is for you only. Please write your son's name in the place where it is written as "Raghavendran" and submit it, duly completed, without any further delay.'

"I don't comprehend this. How did you get this form?"

"A teacher working here had taken an application form for his relative, but he has returned it unused. We have informed the Headmaster about it and kept the form aside, for your sake." Sri Rao, on hearing this, felt a chillness passing through him.

Later, the form got at the eleventh hour, was duly submitted to the school and Raj Mohan was allowed to take the entrance examination. He then got admitted in the school and ere long, distinguished himself as a brilliant student.

'Look father, Sri Raghavendra only has given me this application form - that too with his name written thereon,' was the triumphant outburst of the lad, as soon as the form was got. The joy of the astounded father knew no bounds, when he saw his son having such unshakeable faith in Sri Gururaja.

There is yet another happening like this in the life of the same devotee.



Sri Krishnamurthi Rao, as was his wont, was one day cycling from Ulasinattan village to Jolarpettai, after closing time of the school. He was meditating upon Raghavendra and chanting his name incessantly, as was his habit while pedalling. In the carrier behind the cycle, he had, as usual, kept his basket containing his lunch-box and a zip-bag that held some money and documents, besides the school key.

On reaching the cycle-stand at the road junction, Sri Rao found to his dismay, the basket missing from the back of the bicycle. Shocked at its loss, he immediately retraced along the route he had traversed, looking for it everywhere.

'Gururaja! It is not my possessions alone that have been lost, but more importantly the documents and the key of the school, as well. Oh, what am I to do now... How am I going to extricate myself from this awkward situation,' lamented Sri Krishnamurthi Rao and dejectedly walked towards the banyan tree beyond a cluster of plantain trees, on the way to the village. And there, a venerable old man made his appearance before him.

'Brother, your face reflects disappointment and distress. Have you lost anything?'

'Yes, please....'

'Look, is this the thing you have missed?'

Yes! It was the same basket and Sri Rao was left dumbfounded on seeing it in the hands of the old man.

Ripe old age, white beard and sparkling eyes reflective of compassion and grace - that was the old man. He then continued, 'Please have this. Verify the contents and make sure that everything is in order. It is already late and you will have to go home.....'

Sri Krishnamurthi Rao took it in his hands mechanically and after thanking the venerable old man, moved away from there. But, after covering some distance he thought, 'Oh, I did not ask him how he got this.....his eyes were truly captivating.....let me go and see him again,' retracing his steps towards the tree.

But there, he could see the tree alone standing as before, with its branches swaying in the breeze. Yes, the old man was missing and could not be seen anywhere there, as far as eyes could behold.

'Ah, he looked like Sri Gururaja. Can I see him once more... Will I have that grace again?' is how Sri Krishnamurthi Rao has since been ruminating in regret, whenever passing that way.

And curiously, (in circumstances almost similar to this), one Sri James is also in search of his Lord, his eyes always looking for Him eagerly in mountains and caves, in expectation of beholding Him, once more.

Young James was good at crafting idols. He was an expert in chiselling and fashioning divine figures. Sri Krishnamurthi Rao and Jolarpettai Balraj had placed an order with him for making an idol of Sri Gururaja to a height of about 1 1/2 foot.

Sri Srinivase Rao, a retired Amina at Tiruvannamalai, had such an idol of 3/4' height that was

breathhtaking in its splendour. It was the enquiries regarding its creator that led to getting information about Sri James.

When the order was placed, Sri James told Sri Krishnamurthi Rao that he would drop a letter, as soon as the idol was completed. So, Mr.Rao and those who had accompanied him, returned to Jolarpettai.

After some time, they received a letter from James informing them that the idol was ready. Sri Rao and Balraj, along with one Parthasarathy, rushed to Mr.James with great expectation and eagerness.

The idol was crafted most exquisitely and all the three were left marvelling at it.

Sri Gururaja's idol was actually a bit taller than what they had asked for and the devotees' eyes were blinded by tears of joy on seeing it in the right proportion.

'By crafting this idol, I have been blessed with a rare privilege', said James with excitement. He then continued, 'I went to the mountain in search of granite stones for chiselling this idol. Even after examining several rocks, I could not get one to my liking. For the size specified by you, I could not actually get the proper stone and when I was struggling like that, I saw my Lord there, whose presence I had been expecting and praying for, since long.'

'He told me, "This rock is not alright. Please take the other one....the idol will come out well, as it conforms to the sastraic norms."'

"They have specified as 1 1/2', but this one is bigger," I said.

‘Height is not the criterion. It is the figure that is important. I am telling you that the image of Sri Rayaru can be chiselled in this.’

After enlightening thus, the Divine being disappeared.

James recounted the occurrences to Sri Krishnamurthi Rao and others most emotionally, lamenting that in spite of searching everywhere, he could not see his Lord again. Sri Rao and his companions were left gaping in amazement on hearing these.

The idol chiselled by James was then taken to Jolarpettai and consecrated there. Presently, pujas to this idol are performed regularly and devotees worship it in large numbers.

Apart from Nanjangud, this is the only place where Sri Raghavendra is worshipped in idol form. And a mrithika Brindavan is yet to be installed in Jolarpettai. However, under the stewardship of Sri Balraj, the Raghavendra Seva Sangam at that place, is making earnest efforts towards that end.

In the chapter on the Sirigolla incident, a mention has already been made about Sri Balraj (i.e. in the episode in which Sri Raghavendra follows a devotee on foot, to his place). The next occurrence dealt with also carries a reference about him, but later, an exclusive chapter has been devoted to explain the strange happenings in which he figures.

What follows now is an incident in which a non-believer transforms into an earnest devotee of Sri Raghavendra, on the same lines as the Lingayat of

Athni, who had no devotion at all towards God, but later on turns out to be Gururaja's zealous bhakta - spending the latter part of his life with a lute in his hand, immersed always in composing and singing hymns on the Almighty. Yes, Kamalakar Joshi who was academically a brilliant student, but pagan in his outlook, becomes a great follower of Sri Raghavendra and how this change came about is going to be seen minutely in the pages that follow.

### **SRI GURURAJA, WHO GRACES EVEN THE NON-BELIEVERS**

In the last chapter, we have seen that Sri Raghavendra never disappoints the devotees who totally surrender themselves to him, with unshakeable faith in him. And to those who pray to him with absolute devotion, he has never failed to extend his grace, when necessary. Some may feel disturbed at times that their prayers have not been answered forthwith, but Sri Raghavendra is one who will definitely lend his helping hand, when appropriate and deserving.

He will not certainly belie the expectations of anyone who asserts to others, 'Develop faith in Sri Raghavendra and see the changes in you.' To put it differently, Sri Raghavendra, immediately graces those who are drawn towards him by the assurance of other devotees. Instances to prove this are countless and we may see a few of them here.

Kamalakar Joshi was a Brahmin. Generally, those belonging to that sect are devout, if not extremely pious.

Even if they should not be of such disposition, most of them would have at least imbibed the faith that there is a Supreme power beyond us. There are of course some exceptions, as there is a small number of non-believers amongst Brahmins too.

Kamalakar Joshi was one such rarity. He not only had an aversion for God, but also derided those who believed in Divinity. He was, however, brilliant in his studies and always ahead of others.

His co-students would often deliberate this among themselves.

'We are meticulously concentrating on our lessons; we pray to the Almighty very devoutly and seldom neglect our studies, yet it is Kamalakar Joshi who excels us in getting marks in the examinations. How is this?' will be their reflection on such occasions.

Kamalakar, when asked about this, would pass the sarcastic comment, 'I do not unnecessarily waste my time, diverting my attention towards God; that is why I am able to top the list.'

That year, Kamalakar Joshi came out with flying colours in the M.Phil. examination. In jubilation, he told his parents that his achievement should be celebrated in style and the elders too gave their consent to it.

The parents, though often regretful that their son was not devout, would console themselves that he was at least studious and dutiful.

In celebration of his outstanding success, they soon arranged for a grand feast at which Kamalakar Joshi was in high spirits that day.

Those who were not knowing about his atheistic leanings blessed him on the occasion, in the customary way, saying, 'By God's grace you have obtained distinction in your examination, outranking others. Congratulations, and may this be the fore-runner to many more such glories'. His reaction to it was however lukewarm and he would say, 'No, not by the grace of the Almighty, but by the dint of my labour.' The invitees too would take it in a lighter vein and depart the scene, smilingly.

Kamalakar Joshi would return the smile, but would inwardly be indignant at their attributing his success to Divine mercy. He started ruing why relatives/friends should have ever been invited at all for the party. But when the guests were having their food in an atmosphere of mirth and fun, Kamalakar Joshi joined his father in exchanging pleasantries with everyone of them, as is formal on such occasions.

'What Joshi, why not you join us' said many of them, showing the few empty seats there.

'Oh, how can it be done! I am the one hosting this and only after attending to all of you, I can sit at the table'.

'I say, don't delay any longer, lest there be no food left for you, even for the taste of it'.

'Oh! We are really delighted by the quality of the preparations and their marvellous taste'.

Such were the comments passed on by the invitees as they started taking leave of the Joshis.

Kamalakar Joshi, his parents and a few others ther

‘Oh, by God’s grace, the celebration went off very well.’

‘How can it be called a mercy of the Lord? You bought things of good quality, the cooks engaged were really proficient in their job....and you spent liberally - therefore the celebration was a grand success.’

‘Let there be no further argument between father and son and let your attention be turned towards eating your food,’ chided the mother lovingly, with a sense of pride and happiness.

Everyone ate well in the family gathering, but after some time Kamalakar Joshi started feeling uneasy and vomitted all the food he had consumed.

The parents did not bother about it then, as they thought that it could have been due to lack of sleep and strain that their boy had been subjected to during the few days preceding the celebration. The mother however felt inwardly that the evil eyes of some jealous ones could have affected her son that way.

On the next day also, the regurgitation and spewing continued and Joshi’s parents made him take complete rest, hoping that their son would be alright soon. But alas, it was not to be so, as the disgorging recurred on the third day also and was occurring regularly after every intake of food.

The boy was, therefore, taken to the best available doctors, but the malady persisted, as even the intake of medicines could not be retained in the system and was being expelled instantaneously.



The parents felt distressed that if the sickness of their son should prolong, he would soon become weak and emaciated.

‘What doctor, can this not be cured? Will I not be able to see my son cheerful and buoyant as before?’ wept the dear mother.

‘Don’t worry madam, we are doing our best and giving him every possible treatment for his ailment, but still I suggest you should be praying to the Almighty for his well-being’ was the reply from the doctor that left the mother in uncontrollable grief.

While so, a Brahmin visited their house at that time. And when the Joshis recounted to him their son’s predicament, he told them, ‘Oh, you are worried about this? I would advise you to take your son to Mantralaya and perform seva there for immediate relief.’

‘Swami, we are prepared for that. But our son has to agree to it,’ the parents said, apprising him of Kamalakar Joshi’s atheistic outlook.

‘I shall make him agree’ said the visitor and approached Kamalakar Joshi.

‘Kamalakar! My congratulations and blessings to you for the laurels you have won in your university course. You have studied with deep concentration and great perseverance, securing high marks in your examination. It is not God who has given those marks, just for your sake. You have written the exam well and deservedly got them, for your performance. I bless you again for that,’ said the Brahmin visitor. Kamalakar

Joshi, on hearing such sympathetic words, sat up in rapt attention, eagerly expecting the visitor to continue the dialogue.

The Brahmin continued.

'You have read the lessons in your syllabus, with keen interest. Undoubtedly, the questions in the examination would have been from those lessons only and you would have answered them with great confidence. Similarly, those who have specialised in medicine would have studied well about our illnesses, the reason for their occurrence and how they should be cured, securing their university degree in that discipline. And only after qualifying themselves in this manner, they start treating patients, is it not?'

'Yes, please.'

'Then, why are they not in a position to cure this illness that has afflicted you so suddenly? You spent money, had good cooks employed and have yourself reasoned out that the grand success of the celebration arranged in your house was attributable to these factors. Presently your parents are spending more than what is actually warranted and have been consulting the best in the field, for treating your malaise. Yet you have not been cured of it. Can you say why?...'

'No, I do not also understand it.'

'That is why I am telling you this. If not for your sake, at least for the sake of your parents, you should eschew your vanity and give up your principles. I suggest your accompanying them just for a change of place that

should be conducive to your recovery. Why not you try this course of action?’

‘Is it to Mantralaya?...’

‘Yes! You studied well and got your degree. But an illiterate cowherd, Venkanna, through the grace of Sri Raghavendra, served as a Diwan with distinction, for which there are historical recordings. These are not imaginary stories and in fact you could delve into them in various writings. I am not however putting it across that you should transform yourself overnight and become a devout person. I am only advising you to go on a visit to Mantralaya. You need not worship Sri Raghavendra at that place. Just have your bath there in the Tungabhadra. Even that I am suggesting, only because it is a daily routine that you are accustomed to and not for the sake of worshipping Sri Raghavendra. In the Tungabhadra, even other creatures take their dip, like us humans. And those having their bath in that river don’t do it for the sake of Sri Raghavendra,’ he said and with a pause added, ‘What do you say about this?’

Kamalakar Joshi, on hearing these words, slowly exhibited signs of some inclination to visit Mantralaya. The thought that without compromising his atheistic principles he could go there, blossomed in his mind.

‘Alright, as desired by you, I shall come to Mantralaya. But I should not be subjected to any compulsions’ said the young boy to his parents. The elders too agreed to their son’s demand and started to the holy place, accompanied by him.

On reaching Mantralaya and setting his foot there, Kamalakar Joshi did not feel anything spectacular about the place.

The family rented a room and lodged itself there. The parents, without delay, made necessary arrangements for the 'Sankalpa Seva' they were to perform for the welfare of their son.

On the morrow, all three of them got up early and after their bath in the Tungabhadra, went to the Brindavana for darshan. While his parents prayed to Sri Raghavendra with utmost devotion, Kamalakar Joshi evinced little interest in worshipping before the Brindavana and made his exit from there without even taking the Thirtha (holy water).

When the elders were doing the pradakshana - namaskaras, the youngster was sitting aside, engrossed in other thoughts. Even the panchamrutha abhisheka, Tulsi archana and puja to Sri Moola Rama did not have any effect on him and no change in his mental outlook was visible.

After the mahamangalarathi, everyone went for Thirthaprasad (the prasad, served as lunch).

Joshi had such an aversion for food that he could not even bear the sight of the rice that was being served there - not because it was Mantralaya prasad (for which he had a dislike), but on account of the fear that he may have to vomit it, if consumed.

Despite his parents' earnest pleadings, Kamalakar refused to take food, but later sat for lunch, when pressurised by the staff of the Sri Mutt.

Many days' suppressed hunger and the delicious taste of the food served there caused Joshi to gulp morsel after morsel without any inhibition, making him

even forget the principles that he had been observing scrupulously in the past.

After taking sufficient quantity of food, Joshi got up and retired to the lodge, seized by the usual anxiety that he may have to vomit it in no time.

Minutes ticked into hours...but there was absolutely no trouble for the lad. And that night, Joshi slept well! The next day too, he took food and the experiment followed, day after day.

Kamalakar Joshi was at a loss to understand anything. But slowly he started realizing that he had become alright, only by the grace of Sri Raghavendra. He felt from the depth of his heart that the Swami had not only provided him food there, but also cured his malaise. He was then set to thinking that he was indebted to the Swami and was in a quandary as to how he could repay his debt to him.

Kamalakar Joshi, from then onwards, became an ardent devotee of Sri Raghavendra and in fact he visited Mantralaya again and did seva to the Swami for a mandala (40 days), before returning to his place. In course of time, Joshi became an advocate, later a magistrate and was finally elevated as District Judge. Needless to add that he distinguished himself in his profession - undoubtedly due to the grace of Sri Raghavendra.

I have not met Kamalakar Joshi, as these incidents had taken place as long back as 1939-40. But recently, I had the opportunity of meeting another person, almost of the same convictions as Kamalakar Joshi.

He was a pagan, propagating atheism, day in and day out. But later, he transforms himself into a very zealous devotee, and has since then been rendering discourses on Sri Raghavendra, unremittingly.

Before the change took place, the person had absolutely no faith in God, but on one occasion he accompanied a friend to Mantralaya, under compulsion. There he became very ill - to the point of almost being dead. It was at that time he resolved, 'Guru Raghavendra, if you save me from this predicament and give me a new lease of life, I shall always be chanting your holy name, till my last breath.' True to that, he has been spreading divine worship and the glory of Sri Raghavendra through religious discourses that he has been delivering in an inspiring manner.

Sri Raghavendra has appeared before him in person. But unlike Joshi, he is not a Brahmin. On the other hand, he was born in a low caste and today scores of people fall at his feet in worship of him as followers - all because he is disseminating the greatness of Sri Raghavendra, through discourses rendered with mono-acting.

He is none else than Jolarpettai Balraj!

We are going to see in detail about Sri Balraj in a separate chapter in this writing, but before that let us examine a few aspects about this chapter.

As mentioned in the beginning, Sri Raghavendra seldom fails to redeem the faith of his devotees, who affirm that steadfast devotion towards him will not go in vain. This can be explained logically in a simple manner by citing the happenings in the Prahlada avatar.

The earliest mundane birth of Sri Raghavendra was as Prahlada and when the latter was a child he had defied the commands of his father Hiranyakasipu and withstood all the sufferings inflicted on him by the wicked designs of the progenitor, deriving strength from the Narayana nama that his lips were chanting incessantly. The heartless father, unable to bear the ignominy, challenges him.

'I say, where is the Narayana you are talking about?'

'I can pinpoint the place where he can be found, only if there be one where he will not be present'.

'If so, will he be in this pillar or the next one' - bawled out Hiranyakasipu, pointing repeatedly to the pillars around, one after the other.

And when Prahlada replied in the affirmative (as many times as he was asked), declaring emphatically, 'He will be in any pillar', the Lord had moved from pillar to pillar (as pointed to by Hiranyakasipu), to vindicate his beloved devotee's assurance, is the view expressed by those who moralize the episode.

In line with this, Sri Raghavendra (who was Prahlada in an earlier birth), graces even the non-believers, for the sake of his devotees who try to instil divine worship in their hearts by the assurance that Sri Raghavendra could be relied upon for mercy at any time. And this undoubtedly is the reality.

Kamalakar Joshi was at first unbending in his attitude. But when the Brahmin visitor to his house sowed in the youngster the seed of faith, Sri Raghavendra caused it to take deep roots in him from

The incidents involving Volga Mega, Ramanathan Chettiar, Mallappa Shinde and the like (covered in Part I of this work), reveal the same. For all these persons, it was somebody's counselling about the bountiful mercy of Sri Raghavendra that caused the turning point in their lives.

'Oh, you don't have peace of mind, is it? Please go to Mantralaya and experience the change in you,' was one such advice given to a person in South America who then comes rushing to Mantralaya and at last gets there what she had been craving for, since long.

'For the physical ailment that persists in you, I suggest your going to the holy place called Mantralaya, where you can get cured of it' was the guidance given to Ramanathan Chettiar that proved a boon to him in the end, when he was rid of his malaise. The silver chariot donated by him to the Sri Mutt is the proof of this.

In the chapter dealing with the incidents concerning Ramanathan Chettiar in Part I, a few lines were devoted to Mallappa Shinde also and more could not be said there for want of space.

Mallappa Shinde was an affluent person, but was suffering from a chronic stomach disorder. By the grace of Sri Raghavendra he was later cured of the illness and in gratitude of it, he has dedicated to Sri Gururaja a mantap constructed at his cost in front of the Brindavana at Mantralaya. This had happened during the period of Sri Sujayeendra Thirtha when he was the chief of the Sri Mutt and we shall be knowing in detail about how the mantap that is now providing historical evidence of the



episode, came to be raised then. And the grace that Sri Mallappa Shinde enjoyed will truly be enthralling to know about.

Sri Raghavendraswami's benevolence did not stop with Mallappa Shinde alone. His family members too have recently enjoyed his abundant grace and the occurrence finds narration in Part III.

We shall now move on to the next chapter to see Mallappa Shinde.



## THE GRACE ENJOYED BY MALLAPPA SHINDE!

Mantralaya is just two hours' journey by bus, from Raichur. Yet, an affluent family of Raichur had not visited that place, although it was in enjoyment of vehicular comforts.

The family was well known at Raichur, as the Shindes. It was very devout and philanthropic, ever helpful to the needy.

The eldest of the household was known by the name, Mallappa Shinde. He was a person ever busy in his profession and in the midst of his tight schedule he could scarcely get the opportunity of visiting Mantralaya, even once.

Some may not have the financial resources to visit Mantralaya but would still make a trip to the place, at least with borrowed funds. But even if money be available, it is the Divine grace that one should have, to visit holy places

of pilgrimage. Strangely, Mallappa Shinde, for long, had not been endowed with that blessing.

Be that so, the crux of the problem in this episode is Mallappa Shinde's ailment - the intense stomach pain he would often suffer from. At times it would be unbearable to the point of his squirming in agony. Even the best available medical treatment could not cure the malady and those around him would often rue that such a kind hearted person be suffering so much.

Mallappa Shinde had no vices and his eating habits were also normal. He led a virtuous life and yet why he should be subjected to the kind of torment that he was undergoing, was the concern expressed by everyone.

The Lord tells in Gita, 'Partha! Many many births both you and I have passed. I can remember all of them, but you cannot. While rewarding, I take into account the deeds of the earlier birth also, in every individual case.'

This concept may be explained by means of an example in our present day life.

If a person who has deposited funds in a bank dies, his son is entitled to get the amount and spend it in any manner he chooses. But the bank need not examine whether the money is spent properly or not. In other words, so long as the money and the interest accrued thereon remain with the bank, it is bound to pay the sum to the legal heir, to the last pie.

In the same way, we would have deposited with the Divine bank the totality of our good and bad deeds. And God will reward us with accrued interest for the virtues

and vices we have been responsible for and this process will continue in the subsequent births also, like a bank allowing drawals from the balance amount in deposit with it.

It is because of this, even the morally righteous ones in this birth are subject to distress, as a result of the evil deeds of their earlier birth. The same holds good in respect of those who enjoy good life in this birth, despite their not being of high morals.

Virtue or sin would last only till the accretion exists. If the sum total of accumulated sins is exhausted, the virtuous will reap benefits only. Similarly, if the evil doers have caused depletion of the cumulative virtues of their earlier birth, their fate will be sealed.

Despite his being good, Mallappa Shinde was afflicted by an incurable disease, undoubtedly arising out of a carry over of the sins of his earlier birth. If that were to be nullified, he will start enjoying happiness. And this is what we are going to see later.

Mallappa Shinde, under medical advice, started for Bombay, as treatment in Raichur did not cure his illness.

In Bombay, he had a thorough check-up in a hospital equipped with all modern facilities. The doctors who saw his case history and the course of treatment he had been given till then, told him, 'You have been treated properly, but since there is no relief from pain, surgery is unavoidable now.' They prescribed some medicines preparatory to the operation and subjected him to a few tests. He was then advised to come there again after

Shinde then returned to Raichur and after a few days, journeyed to Bombay again.

The doctors, who examined him afresh, told him hesistantly, 'Despite all the treatment, there appears to be no scope now for surgery.'

'What are you telling doctor? Should I continue to suffer like this till death? Please do the surgery, I don't mind if the result of it is otherwise.....'

'We are concerned that the surgery should not lead to such an end.'

'It does not matter, doctor. Please try your best. If I should be getting relief only by death, let it happen so,'

'Look, Mr.Mallappa Shinde! We are doctors no doubt, but we are also human beings. We are not prepared to push you in a well with stones tied around your waist. But you can swim yourself, as long as possible, without the weight of the stones. This is our opinion and you may now get back to Raichur, please.'

Mallappa Shinde's mind was in agony, after returning home. Not that he was afraid of death, but being seized by the thought that he would have to be fighting with the devil in him (the stomach pain), till his end.

As Shinde was anguishing thus, an old friend of his came to meet him after a long time. Seeing the pitiable condition of Mallappa Shinde, he gave him a picture of Sri Raghavendra and advised him to worship the holy

Shinde, being a very religious person, was convinced of what his friend had told him. He therefore started worshipping the picture of Sri Raghavendra every day in the orthodox manner advised by his friend.

While so, Shinde had a dream one night, in which Sri Raghavendra appeared and told him, 'Don't worry, Mallappa! You get back to Bombay and have your surgery there. Your malaise will be cured, ere long.'

Mallappa Shinde, struck with wonder, searched for his friend and told him about his strange dream. And not long after that, he was in Bombay.

There, a further surprise awaited him, when the chief surgeon whom he met, told him, 'Come Shinde, we have been waiting for you only. We have decided to perform the operation on you, tomorrow itself.'

'How do you know that I have come for the surgery only, doctor? Further, you seem to have booked the operation theatre also, for tomorrow!' asked Shinde in astonishment.

'Everything is according to what has been ordained by Sri Raghavendra', said the doctor and further explained how the Swami had appeared in his dream and enlightened him that he (Shinde) was to come that day and that the operation could be had on the following day. On learning this, a chillness passed through Shinde and he felt thrilled beyond description. He was in tears at the thought how considerate Sri Raghavendra had been towards him.

On the morrow, the operation was taking place at the

ervision of the Chief surgeon. Watching the chief of team perform it with great dexterity and ease, the ers were amazed at the speed with which he was cutting the job and found it difficult to keep pace with in handing the instruments and things required for surgery in progress. But, except the Chief surgeon, e of those present there was aware that it was Sri jhavendra, who was attending to the task, disguised ne Chief surgeon.

Yes, after the successful completion of the surgery, Chief surgeon himself told the others:

'When I got up from my room and was bound for the ration theatre, I saw a saintly person in ochre robes, ig ahead of me. At the entrance to the operation atre, when you all met him and told him, "Everything is dy doctor, the operation can be started," I was startled took some time to recover myself. I could make out n that the sanyasi must have appeared like me, to r eyes. After a little while, I entered the operation atre to see what was taking place and there the monk s performing the surgery and you were all assisting in the process, just as you normally do for me. sides, you all seemed to have not noticed my sence there and I could easily understand that. After operation was over, he departed in a jiffy and I was wondering at everything that had happened right ore my eyes'.

When the others heard this, everyone was baffled in same manner, by the strange happenings that had

And when Mallappa Shinde was convalescing at Raichur, after the successful operation on him, his mind was always engrossed in thoughts about Sri Raghavendra. His heart melted at the mercy of Sri Raghavendra in appearing not only in his dream and of the doctor's, but also at his donning the role of the surgeon and performing the operation on him.

He was regretful that he had not visited Mantralaya till then, despite its proximity to his place. He then vowed that he would go there with his friend, to repay his debt to the swami.

### **MALLAPPA SHINDE IN MANTRALAYA**

That night, Shinde had a dream in which he could see something like a place of worship and an enclosed space with zinc sheet covering. He could not make out which place it was, when he tried to recollect in the morning the dream that he had in the night - because it was a place he had not seen before.

Next day also he had a dream and this time Sri Raghavendra appeared before him (the second time he gave darshan to Shinde in his dream). 'Mallappa! What you are seeing now is Mantralaya, the place of my Brindavana. The zinc sheets here must be removed and concrete ceiling laid, in their place. Sri Sujayeendra is taking steps for this,' he said and disappeared.

On the following day, Mallappa arrived at Mantralaya with his family and friends. The place appeared to him

Sri Sujayeendra Thirtha was the pontiff at that time and Mallappa Shinde prostrated before him and narrated most emotionally about his dream - how Sri Raghavendra had told him that the zinc sheets should be replaced by an RCC ceiling - a rare blessing for the devotee. He also placed before the Swami a cheque for Rs.One lakh he had brought for the purpose, with a resolute mind that he should complete at his cost the mantap in front of the Brindavana, as enjoined upon him by Sri Raghavendraswami in his dream.

The Swami, who heard everything, said, 'Mallappa, please keep this cheque yourself.'

'Why Swami?' quivered Shinde.

'Don't get perturbed. Are you giving me one lakh rupees and asking me to complete the construction within that amount,' asked Sri Sujayeendra.

Shinde immediately felt a pricking in him. He then concluded that he was duty bound to fulfil what had been ordained by Sri Raghavendra and accordingly, on an auspicious day, he brought some engineers there and under his personal supervision had the mantap raised soon.

The expenditure ultimately was not Rs.one lakh, but touched four lakhs. It was realized then how meaningful was the action of Sri Sujayeendra in returning the cheque given by Shinde.

Even today, visitors to Mantralaya can see in that mantap a portrait of Mallappa Shinde sporting a broad smile, fixed on a wall in the space where the queue for dharma darshan has to pass through.



Sri Raghavendra will help those who have belief in him from the depth of their hearts and will appear in any form, for their sake. In a similar way, he will take from his devotees whatever he wants, according to their capacity.

If it is perceived that there is seemingly a quid pro quo in what the Swami wants to be fulfilled vis a vis the miracles performed by him, it is off the tangent and requires proper understanding.

If the various incidents are examined, it would be apparent that if somebody wants to do something, Sri Raghavendra will only guide its accomplishment and never demand that it be done for him, in return for what he had graced.

There are several wealthy ones like Mallappa Shinde. But, can everyone have the grace that Shinde was privileged to have? In fact, the blessing that he had from Sri Raghavendra, has attained a permanency in the pages of history associated with the saint's life.

In the last chapter, I have explained the reason why such a noble person like Mallappa shinde had suffered agony, citing in testimony, the moral codes enunciated in the Bhagavad Gita. Perhaps, a few could be sceptical about it.

It could be questioned by them why we should indulge in Divine worship, if our good and bad actions of an earlier birth be influencing our present day life. Even if one does good, the balance of evil deeds of the previous brith will be adversely affecting the person and at what point of time he would be experiencing it, is something beyond human comprehension.

And if such affliction be lasting throughout one's life, of what avail is it to have faith in God? If good things happen, it is undoubtedly the result of the balance of virtue of the previous birth continuing and so too, the sins of the earlier birth exert influence in the next birth.

In fact, such reasoning could even cause individuals to be passive, resigning themselves to their fate.

But Sri Ramakrishnaparamahansa gives an explanation concerning this:

"It is according to our good or bad deeds that we get rewarded or punished and one cannot therefore escape retribution, when it is due. Even if God be with us, we have to suffer the penalty for our sins, but at least we can lessen its impact on us by our faith in Divinity.

If, as a punishment, one were to drag a log of wood for a distance, it would be hard to pull it along the ground, but if the same thing were to be immersed in water, the task would be easier. So long as the requital is to tug it to a specific distance, it is inconsequential whether it is done on land or in water.

In a like manner, even for the faults we are ignorant of, castigation is inevitable. But when we hold steadfastly to the Almighty, we can at least reduce our sufferings, like drawing the log of wood in water."

Let us therefore believe Sri Raghvendaswami single-mindedly like Sri Mallappa Shinde, to lead a life of happiness.

A steadfast devotee, in this manner, once placed a demand before Sri Raghavendra. He worshipped him

/ devoutly for about 12 years, but his prayer had no answer. In consequence, he approaches for advice, the one whose dictates Sri Raghavendra would be bound to follow. We shall see this interesting occurrence in the next chapter.

## **PERFORMED SEVA FOR YEARS TOGETHER AND RULED A KINGDOM!**

Sankalpa seva implies total surrender and worship with unshakeable faith, for protection and benediction. Numerous devotees vow to observe strict austerities and perform sankalpa seva at the main Brindavana mantralaya, as also at other places where mrithikadevadasas exist. Those benefited by such seva are not a small number and to pen all their experiences would perhaps be impossible, for anyone.

Pilgrims visiting Mantralaya can observe hundreds of devotees doing the sankalpa seva, every day.

The religious vow for doing seva is normally for 3, 5, 9 or 48 days, but devotees can observe its performance for even longer durations.

The devotee, who has vowed to perform sankalpa seva, should take bath and with partly dried clothes on her person, do the pradakshana and namaskara in the morning and evening every day, until completion of the period of seva. Thereafter, hastodaka should be arranged on the following day, for termination of seva. (Hastodaka signifies feeding the saint). Sr

either immediately or in course of time, by enlightenment in dream or through other actions (in accord with the depth of our devotion). However, in a bizarre occurrence, a devotee did seva at Mantralaya, not for days, but years together, in the fond hope of fulfilment of his desire. The seva extended to nearly 12 years and yet he could not achieve his goal. So he became irate with Sri Raghavendra and gave expression to his feelings, in front of the Brindavana.

‘Oh, Raghavendra Guru, I have been praying to you with utmost devotion for 12 years and yet you are sitting there, unmoved. Is it not your duty to fulfil my longing? It is said that you rush to help your devotees, wherever they may be. But I have been circumambulating around your Brindavana here for the last 12 years with great devotion and yet I am not graced. Are you really present here in your Brindavana?’ the devotee vented in great distress.

Naturally, the question arises why Sri Raghavendra should not have acceded to the demand of the devotee.

The one who had prayed with intense devotion for 12 years was a very poor man, but what he had yearned for was the throne- yes, he wanted to become a Maharaja!

It is common for devotees to pray for removal of sorrows, relief from maladies, acquisition of riches, fruition of marriage alliance, progeny and the like, but this devotee, who was so much poverty-stricken (as to be at the mercy of the Sri Mutt to get even his daily food), had no qualms of entertaining hopes of becoming a ruler and praying for that.

Both the devotee and Sri Raghavendra, were unyielding - the saint not being inclined to extend the mercy sought of him and the devotee, steadfastly holding on to his prayer.

While so, the devotee suddenly had a flash that he could submit his prayer to Lord Venkataramana, the deity worshipped most devoutly by Sri Raghavendra, so that He could cause the latter to grace the fulfilment of his heart's desire. He therefore set forth to Tirumala, with great devotion and in eager expectation that he could achieve his life's ambition.

He thought that mere mental worship of the Lord and submission of his request through prayer would not suffice and that he should prefer a complaint in writing to the Lord of the Seven Hills. And with this in mind, he reached Tirupati and there he deposited in the hundi of Lord Venkatesa the grievance against Sri Raghavendra that he had set in writing, on a sheet of paper.

That night, he had a peaceful sleep, relieved as he was that his purpose had been served by the lodging of the complaint in the Lord's sacred hundi. He was in a state of contentment that it was the responsibility of Lord Srinivasa to take further action about it, even as gracing the attainment of his cherished desire was the concern of Sri Raghavendra.

In such mental tranquillity he has a dream, in which he sees a court-room scene.

The petitioner, in that scenario, is none else than himself. while the respondent is Sri Raghavendraswami

And the Judge is Lord Sri Venkatesa! The dream continues...

Judge: (Looking at the petitioner). You may now present your case.

Petitioner: My Lord, everyone says that this respondent showers his mercies on devotees, like a Kalpavruksha and a Kamadhenu. I believed it and prayfully did seva for 12 years, but there has not been even an iota of benefit for me.

Judge: You have not mentioned what you had prayed for!

Petitioner: I have been a victim of confidence trick - rather I have been cheated by Raghavendraswami.

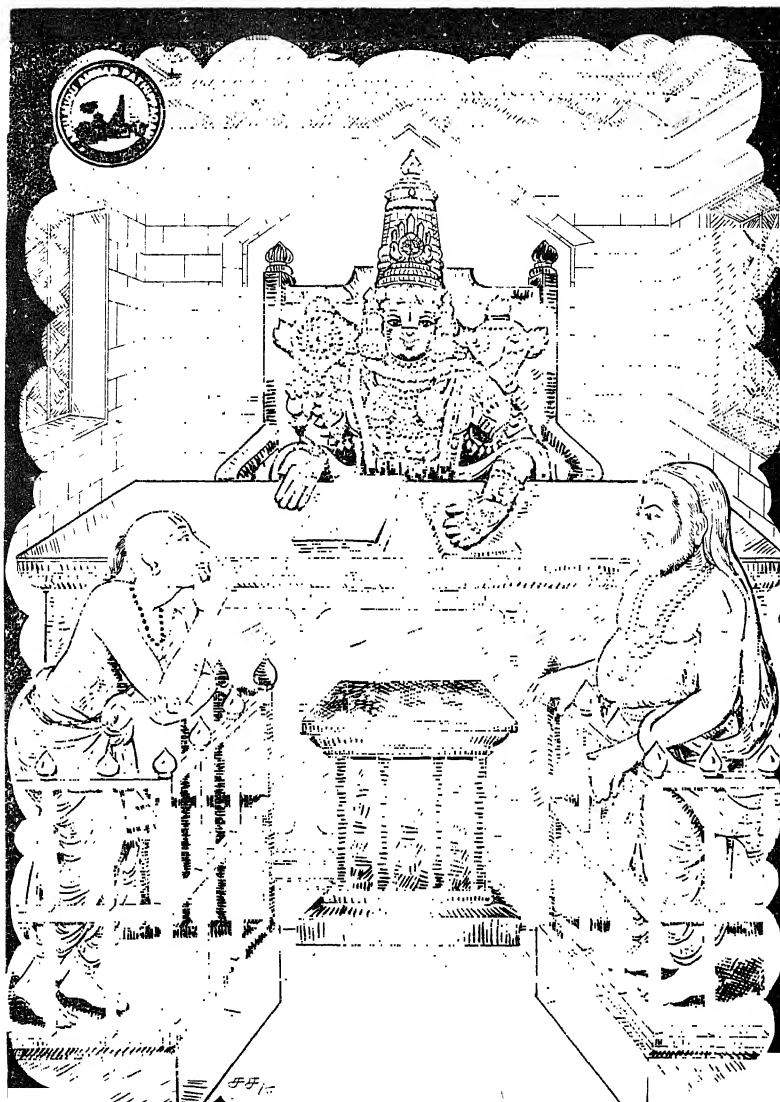
Judge: (Looking at the Respondent). The complainant, without telling the reason for his doing the seva is talking about you only. At least, you should present the matter, for dispensation of justice.

Respondent: Swami! It is a fact that the devotee had worshipped me in great adoration for 12 years. But his craving is excessive and beyond limit. He is a person in penury, but what he wants is the status of a Maharaja! How can I do anything about this, Swami!

Judge: Alright, when a submission has been made by the petitioner, there must be some disposal for it, is it not?

Respondent: True, but this person has no chance at all of becoming a king in this birth.

Petitioner: My Lord! This is unjust. I must become a king and my demand must be met.



Respondent: Yes, it will be fulfilled, but not in this birth. If you do seva with purity of mind for another 12 years for the well-being of all, you will be born as a king in the next birth.

Petitioner: My Lord! He is trying to wreak vengeance on me. If he had said that by doing seva for another 12 years I can sit on the royal throne, that could be accepted. But he says that I can have that blessing, only in the next birth. How can I trust this?

Judge: Can it be clarified to the petitioner?

Respondent: My Lord, if you so will, you can have it accomplished.

Judge: What do you mean by that?

Respondent: If he does seva unselfishly for another 12 years, he will be endowed with the blessing of being born in a royal family in the next birth and this will have to be revealed to him appropriately, in his next birth.

Judge: He has to be enlightened about his earlier birth - that is, the present situation has to be made known to him when he enjoys the staats of Maharaja in the next birth, is it not?

Respondent: Yes, that is exactly what is required, Swami!

Judge: Alright, I am giving you such prowess, to reveal about the happenings in the earlier birth.

The dream ended there, as the devotee was awakened from his sleep. Even at dawn, his mind was not clear about what he had seen in the dream.



'Was it an illusion, because I was constantly thinking about the matter. My becoming a Maharaja in the next birth - can this really happen?

Still, as I have submitted my craving to the Lord and the prayer stands answered, I should again go to Mantralaya.

And what about the petition dropped in the Lord's hundi?

If the happenings in the dream are to be relied upon, the petition must be got back. Otherwise, when the hundi is opened, if it were to be seen by others, I would become a laughing stock when they read the contents thereof and come to know about my action!.'

So thinking, the devotee approached the Devasthanam authorities and pleaded with them that while dropping his cash offering in the hundi, a paper of his had also slipped therein, along with the cash and that it had to be retrieved from the bottom of the hundi.

The authorities who were reluctant earlier, emptied the contents of the hundi afterwards and could get out of it the paper (in which the devotee had represented his grievance in writing to Lord Venkatesa). But, to the astonishment of the devotee, there were no writings on the paper-a chillness passing then through his body!

'Oh, the petition withdrawn in my mind, has also been caused to be rescinded otherwise! My desire will therefore be fulfilled by the Lord and by Sri Raghavendra, without any doubt,' reflected the devotee and with a

informing the Devasthanam authorities about his strange experiences). There he did seva for another 12 years, observing severe austerities and as a result, he was born in a royal family in the next birth.

Naturally, one would be interested to know at this stage, who that king was. But before that, some facts narrated here require an analysis.

A devotee does seva for 12 years and not getting any benefit out of it, he continues the seva for another 12 years and finally reaps the benefit, only in his next birth.

But Venkanna, the cowherd, who was an illiterate, becomes a Diwan through the grace of Sri Raghavendra and distinguishes himself as an able administrator.

One may wonder why this discrimination has been shown. If Sri Raghavendra had willed, could that devotee have not been made a ruler? Venkanna, who merely chants Sri Raghavendra's name, is blessed with Diwan's post. On the contrary, for another devotee who worships him for years together, the benevolence of being given the position that he wanted, is extended only in the next birth! How is this justified?

But whatever mysterious deeds Sri Raghavendra performs, there will surely be fairness.

For one craving beyond his limit and exhibiting keenness about its attainment, Sri Raghavendra will condition the person to the state of his deserving it, before gracing him the mercy. He will not yield to any recommendations from any quarter.

Venkanna, in fact, did not ask for the Diwan's post. When he came running in the forest to have the blessings of the Swami, he had just narrated to him the ordeals he was facing in life. Swami had told him at that time, 'When in trouble, think of me and chant my name, I shall be there to give a helping hand to you.' But Venkanna had not given any serious consideration to it and had even forgotten the words of advice.

It was only when Nawab Siddi Masood Khan threatened him that he would be beheaded if he did not read and explain to him the contents of the letter from Bijapur Sultan Badsha, that Venkanna suddenly remembered about the advice of Sri Raghavendra and started chanting his name and as a consequence had the grace of becoming a Dīwan, later. We have seen this incident explained in detail, in part I.

Quite in contrast to this, the devotee aspiring to become a king was praying for that grace right from the beginning and his yearning was towering beyond attainment. Also, his sincerity of purpose and his actions did not certainly merit the grace he was seeking.

It therefore needs no explication that our prayers should be within limits. One can aspire for a comfortable life, but a beseeching for, say a bonanza from a lottery, will certainly be not heard by Sri Raghavendra.

If we develop unwavering faith in him, Sri Raghavendra will himself shower riches on us. And if refuge is sought in him, he will himself bestow on us

Adverting to the devotee who became a king, it arouses one's interest to know who that Maharaja was, in the scenario of his next birth.

As would have been guessed by now, it was none else than the Mysore Maharaja, Krishnaraja Wodeyar, who has already figured in the Nanjangud episode, recounted earlier. And as mentioned before, to be involved in religious matters, one must also be in enjoyment of the benefits of one's good deeds of the earlier birth. Krishnaraja Wodeyar, to be born in a royal family had done seva to Sri Raghavendraswami for 24 years in his previous birth, as a result of which he was graced not only to be born as a king in his next birth, but also to be instrumental in the advent of Sri Raghavendra at Nanjangud (in an idol form, as already explained in an earlier chapter).

A question may now arise as to how it came to be known that the Maharaja was the one, who, in his earlier birth, had been the poor man who had performed seva for becoming a king. Surely, Sri Raghavendra, who had blessed him to be born as a king, caused also such awareness in him by creating the necessary circumstances for it.

There again was a dream in the Maharaja's sleep! And he sends his men to Viburamapuram Krishnachar, as per the indication he had in the dream!

Krishnachar tells the royal emissaries, 'I myself wanted to come and see the Maharaja, but have been hesitating how to meet him and tell certain things to which he may not give credence. I have even been fearing

punishment, as it would be most embarrassing for a commoner like me to tell such a thing to a person of royal blood, but since you are inviting me, I shall accompany you with some confidence.'

And the Maharaja tells Krishnachar (when he arrives at the place), 'Oh Achar, I had a dream in which an old man asks me whether I would like to be enlightened about my previous birth. I replied in the affirmative and then he said that if I asked you, I could know everything. And that is why you have been brought here'.

'Maharaja, I too had a dream. An elderly person told me in the dream to see you and tell you about your earlier birth. He told me everything about you clearly,' said Krishnachar and narrated to the Maharaja all the happenings relating to his earlier birth!

The Maharaja, after hearing all those, started worshipping Sri Raghavendra even more devoutly, from then onwards.

It cannot be construed from this that since the devotée was born as Maharaja in the next birth (after performing continuous seva in the earlier one), Sri Raghavendra is always slow in answering prayers.

On the contrary, on one occasion, it was at the nick of the moment, when even delay by a few seconds could have caused certain death (that too before his Brindavana), that he rescued a devotee from the trouble that he was in. The then pontiff, Sri Suyamindra Thirtha, had at that time wept before Sri Raghavendra and in an instant the saint, answering to his prayer, caused the

person whose life was saved thus, is now doing great devotional service to Sri Gururaja.

This episode finds place in the next chapter.

## **RAJA GURURAJACHAR GRACED BY SRI GURURAJA**

Raja Sri Gururajachar is a great pundit, who has composed mellifluous hymns on Sri Raghavendraswami. His compositions on Sri Raghavendra under the mudra (identity tag) "Kamalesha", are very popular and well acclaimed by the public.

Just as Sri Vadindra Thirtha, a descendant of Sri Raghavendraswami, has composed "Guruguna stavana" on the saint of Mantralaya, Raja Sri Gururajachar has also been writing slokas and pieces on Sri Raghavendra. The similarity does not end there, as Sri Gururajachar is also of the same lineage as Sri Vadindra.

Raja Sri Gururajachar is the purvashrama son of Sri Suyamindra Thirtha, the 20th pontiff in the line of succession, after Sri Raghavendra.

Sri Gururajachar has special love towards me and I deem it that it is on account of my devotional service to Sri Raghavendra that I have been privileged to have the blessings of Raja Sri Gururajachar also.

It was Sri C.R.Krishnaswami Rao, the manager of Sri Raghavendraswami Mutt, Tiruvallikkeni, who was instrumental in my getting acquainted with Raja Sri

ururajachar. And since my first meeting with him, whenever Sri Gururajachar visits Chennai, r.Krishnaswami Rao would send word to me and arrange for my interaction with the former.

I really felt elated when Sri Krishnaswami Rao introduced me to Sri Gururajachar years ago, apprising me, "Like you, he has also been doing devotional service through his writings in Tamil (on Sri Raghavendra), in a manner that could be understood by .” Later, Sri Rao was also responsible for Raja Sri Gururajachar presenting a foreword to my writing, besides making him entrust to me the work of translating his Kannada writings in Tamil.

The manager of Sri Mutt and myself have discussed at length with Raja Sri Gururajachar on various occasions, about the greatness of Sri Raghavendra and his mysterious deeds. Raja Sri Gururajachar himself has experienced several of those mystiques and we shall be delving into one of those incidents here. And when the happening cited here took place, the manager of the Sri Mutt at Tiruvallikkeni was also present at the scene of its occurrence at that time.

The events narrated here happened about 50 years ago, around 1940 or so. Raja Sri Gururajachar was at that time a scholar doing his Part II Siromani course in Gurusarvabhouma College at Mantralaya and Sri Ramindra Thirtha was the ruling pontiff of the Sri Mutt.

At that point of time, a portable steel vault constructed of thick plates had been brought for the use of the Moola Brindavana establishment at Mantralaya. It

was the trade practice then to do the painting of the item supplied, at the place of its delivery.

The steel vault brought to Mantralaya had been kept in front of the Brindavana, for completion of the painting. And when the work was in progress, the vault doors were left open by the painter for some time, when he went out for recess.

Raja Sri Gururajachar came there at that time with some persons, to oversee the work. The steel vault had an automatic locking device and Sri Gururajachar, who had both the set of keys of the vault in his hand, went inside it to see how it was.

One of the doors of the vault was in a closed position then, while the other one was half open. And lo, when Sri Gururajachar got inside the vault, the door that was left half open, closed by itself, as a result of the jolting caused by his stepping inside. The automatic locking device clicked in the process and Raja Sri Gururajachar was caught inside the vault.

The duplicate key was also with him, as it had not been separated from the bunch containing the original, having been received just then. Those outside were left puzzled and frightened, devoid of ideas and at a loss to know what they should do.

Soon, news reached Sri Suyamindra, the pontiff, and he came to the spot in no time. Several people applied different types of keys to open the lock, but such efforts did not bear fruit, despite repeated attempts.

And when all attempts failed, it was concluded that there was no other alternative but to break open the lock, to get the person outside.



But to do that, the necessary implements and technicians were to be fetched from Adoni - a distance of 55 Kms from Mantralaya. It would take not less than 5 to 6 hours for that, since conveyance facilities were not as well developed then, as at present.

At that juncture, everyone became anxious whether Sri Gururajachar would be able to hold his breath for that long.

Slowly, as minutes ticked, Sri Gururajachar's voice became enfeebled due to exhaustion and lack of fresh air inside. The movement of his limbs too slackened considerably, even as the glimmer of hope spurring him to make all sorts of efforts to open the door was petering out in the closed confines that was bereft of life supporting oxygen. It was almost the final stages then and brooking any further delay would have just caused the inevitable to happen.

It was then that Sri Suyamindra had a flash. He started feeling that with Sri Raghavendra so close by, it was odd that they should have all thought of various other ways of solving the crisis. So, with a deep sense of veneration, he prayed to Sri Raghavendraswami from the depth of his heart, to solve the crisis.

'Appa, Guru Raghavendra, just in front of your Brindavana, there is a person struggling for his life, right before your eyes. And releasing him from his predicament at this hour, is a responsibility that you alone can shoulder and fulfil.

Please do not think for a moment that I am

my purvashrama son. After occupancy of the peeta, all are equal before me and let it not be thought that I am shedding tears before you, on account of the past bondage of my worldly life.

Guru Raghavendra! It is perhaps as a result of the good deeds of my elders that I am occupying the seat you had adorned, blessed with the privilege of doing the Moola Rama puja.

The exalted position that I am enjoying is certainly your blessing and when such is your benevolence, what will devotees think of you, as also of me, if the struggle for life that is taking place in the confines of the vault should end otherwise?

Will they not start talking that a person who could not save his own purvashrama son, is occupying the peeta? And will it not be felt how Sri Raghavendra who could not save one suffering in front of his own Brindavana, could be expected to come running to help others?

And if the person inside the vault is one who really deserves being punished for his sins and it has been so decided to carry it out, he can at least be saved now and made to suffer punitive action outside the holy precincts of the Brindavana, Swami,' vented Sri Suyamindra, most emotionally.

Just then, a metallic sound was heard there and a long puja equipment with perforated edges, used for doing arathi, fell down from its place. Sri Suyamindra, regaining his composure, took it in his hands with great veneration and told those around him, 'Please try to open the vault with this.'

‘Oh, how can this open? We have tried a variety of keys and when they have not clicked, this will be of no avail,’ said the painter.

‘No please, Sri Raghavendra has made this fall down as a response to my prayer. Please therefore open with this.’

Accordingly, when it was tried with the makeshift device, the levers of the lock clicked back and the unlocking was done even as the turn in the reverse direction was just in operation! And lo, the door of the vault too swung back and opened out at the same instant!

Sri Gururajachar was in a semi-conscious state there and after first aid, recovered fully. Thereafter those around the steel vault tried to open it again with the same equipment, but it proved an exercise in futility.

Well, how did that arathi equipment open up the lock earlier? Undoubtedly, therein lies the supernatural power of Sri Raghavendra.

Truly, Sri Raghavendra, who had witnessed the entrapping of Sri Gururajachar inside the vault, has, as a requital, got him impounded in a place everyone would pray for eternal dwelling, viz. his heart. Even today, Raja Sri Gururajachar’s writings and deeds, nay even his breathing are all directed towards Sri Raghavendra.

In the ‘Navaratnamala’, my composition runs, ‘Come at once Raghavendra to grace those in agony’ and I had

After the incident, Sri Suyamindra Thirtha told his purvashrama son, 'Gururaja, this is a new lease of life for you - rather a rebirth I would say. It is only by the grace of Sri Raghavendra you have come alive again. You must therefore engage yourself in devotional service to him throughout your life. And true to those words of advice, Raja Sri Gururajachar has been incessantly writing spiritual/religious works in Kannada, particularly on Sri Raghavendra. He has also been composing melodious Kirtanas on the saint.

The following Kirtana of his is widely rendered by devotees, in worship of Sri Raghavendra:

‘Thunga Thira Virajam - Bhajamana

Raghavendra yati Rajam.’

When in trouble, if one should raise the cry, ‘Guru Raghavendra, please save me from this predicament,’ he will certainly hasten to help the one in agony, just as Sriman Narayana had rushed on Garuda vahana to rescue Gajendra from the jaws of the crocodile, when the elephant king had trumpeted in distress, appealing to Adimoola.

As another similarity to this may be cited the disrobing of Draupadi by Dussasana (in the court of Duryodhana), when the helpless lady raises the cry, “Hey Krishna” and the Lord swiftly responds to her call and protects her from dishonour and outraging of her modesty by clothing her with fresh garments in quick succession, even as she was being stripped off virulently in public.

And when Sri Gururajachar was struggling for his breath in the steel vault, Sri Suyamindra's cry to Guru Raghavendra was instantaneously responded to by the saint and the victim pulled out of the tight spot. The lesson to be learnt from this is that if we are steadfast in our belief, Guru Raghavendra will come to our rescue when prayed to and at times he may extend his helping hand even without our asking for it. Let us see an incident like that in the next chapter.

### **MAKES APPEARANCE AS A CART-MAN!**

Hosaritti is a place on the Varada river. Sri Dhirendra Thirtha, appearing in the dream of a disciple had caused his Brindavana to be shifted to that place five years after his entombment. Sri Suyamindra Thirtha pontiff of Sri Raghavendraswami Mutt, was camping there once.

Sri Mutt was busy at that time in organising the observance of the Mahasamaradhana of Sri Suvrathindra Thirtha.

Sri Suyamindra Thirtha was planning to solemnize the occasion with great devotion and in a fitting manner. An incident that took place then, dates back to about 60 years.

It was the Ekadasi day! And everyone was observing religious fasting on that day. It needs to be mentioned here that this practice is scrupulously

also in devout families and in the various mutts following the age old traditions. On the following day, known as Dwadasi, food will be taken early, after offering to the Deity. Such food will have a special kind of green leaf as an ingredient, for its power of curing intestinal disorders. The item is known by the name Agathi Keerai, in Tamil.

In the bygone times, along with religious observances, maintenance of good health also received equal attention, whereas in the present day environment, even timely food habits is seldom adhered to. And undoubtedly this is the cause for the proliferation of hospitals and dispensaries in every nook and corner, these days.

Be that so, the Mahasamaradhana of Sri Suvrathindra Thirtha on the morrow, required certain preparations and while organising those, it came to light that dhoties and upper cloth customarily given to honour the orthodox and learned Brahmins, were not on hand at that time.

Hosaritti being a small place, such items were not readily available there. They had to be procured from Davanagere - a town far away from there and connected by rail from Haveri (that could be reached only on foot from Hosaritti).

The time at the disposal of the Mutt was barely sufficient to get from Davanagere the things required for the Mahasamaradhana, as the following day was a Dwadasi and the Naivedya and Mahamangalarathi had to be performed early. On normal days, these rituals would be completed only by 12 noon or 1.00 P.M., while

the Dwadasi day they must be completed early in the morning, as per the custom in vogue.

In these circumstances, when everyone was concerned about the problem, Sri Suyamindra Thirtha was reminded of one Sri Raghavendra Rao working in the Bank of Mysore at Davanagere. The pontiff arranged a telegram to be sent to him for bringing the things required, from Davanagere.

Sri Raghavendra Rao, who received the telegram before the closing time of the Bank, bought the required clothes and upper cloth, immediately thereafter. He folded them neatly and carried the load himself, to the railway station. And when the train he travelled by reached Haveri, it was pretty dark. So, as soon as he alighted on the platform, he looked around to see whether anyone was available in the vicinity to accompany him to the Sri Mutt. But there was none and so he started walking alone, chanting Sri Raghavendra stotra.

A little beyond, Sri Rao could hear someone being called and instinctively felt that he was being called by a voice, in the darkness prevalent around. Therefore, he stopped for a while, but armed as he was with the protection afforded by Sri Raghavendra stotra that he was chanting, Sri Rao halted not out of fear, but to know where the call was from. (Sri Raghavendra stotra, it must be mentioned, has the power of warding off fears and those chanting it devoutly, will not have any anxieties, even in adversities).

In fact, the only thought that was occupying his mind

others may be apprehensive of the delay in receipt of the items.

The voice calling him, was clearly audible now and appeared to be at very close range. And when Sri Rao turned his look in the direction from where it emanated, he could see an old man approaching him.

‘I say, are you going to Hosaritti?’, he asked.

‘Yes, Swami’.

‘Are you going alone’

‘Yes, Swami.’

‘In this darkness?’

‘There is Gururaja to guide me, Swami.’

‘I did not mean that. I know you can go without being afraid of anything, but what I was concerned about is the heavy load you are carrying on your head.’

‘At the Railway station, there was no cart available and not a soul was around there at the time I detrained and came out.’

‘Shall I help you in carrying a part of the load?’

‘No please, you are quite old and I would not like you to take that trouble.’

‘Alright, shall I engage a cart for you?’

‘But there appears to be no possibility for that.’

‘You be here, I shall send a cart in a minute,’ said the old man and left the place hurriedly, without even waiting for a response.



As the noise of the receding footsteps of the old man became fainter, the sound of the hoofs of a pair of bullocks and the tinkling of bells around their necks became audible and were growing in intensity every moment.

Soon, there was a cart there with a robust man sitting in it and holding the restraints in his hands. Sri Rao was astounded at its sudden appearance and started thinking, 'Oh, how can this be possible? This bullock cart could have come here within this short time, only if it had not been far away from here. But, as far as my eyes could see, there was no cart visible nearby and how could this old man have located it, when it was not seen anywhere around this place?'

'What Swami, why not you get inside the cart?' said the voice of the cart-man that bestirred Sri Rao, who was in a reverie then.

'First, please dump the load inside, Swami. It is pitiable to see you with such a heavy thing on your head.'

Sri Rao, as though drawn by a magical influence, placed the bundle inside the cart and got into it himself.

As the cart was slowly wending its way thereafter, Sri Rao started his dialogue with the cart-man.

'I say, are you here habitually?'

'My job is to be present, wherever I am called.'

'Were you here all this while? I did not find you when I came here....'

'I was in my usual place only. You have missed

‘What did that old man tell you?’

He said, ‘For tomorrow’s Mahasamaradhana, clothe bundles are to be transported. Please go immediately and see that the person carrying them is safely left at the place he is wanting to reach.’

‘Are you already acquainted with him?’

‘We are of the same clan, please.’

‘Then, is he also taking a share for engaging such conveyance to the passengers?’

‘Swami, what are you asking? It is all arranged by him only - whatever earnings I get.’

‘I am not aware as to what amount he has asked you to receive from me. Surely, he will not be knowing if you get more or even less, from me.’

‘He knows who should give how much, as also what has to be got from whom. If we should be trying to hoodwink him, we only will get beguiled.’

‘Appa...Appa...Please stop the cart, we have come to Hosaritti Brindavana.’

‘Swami, we could not know the passage of time, on account of the conversation we were engaged in....’

Responding in the affirmative, Sri Rao got down and started opening his bag to pay the cartage.

‘Swami, please carry this bundle inside and afterwards you can make the payment due to me’.

‘How much, I say?’

'You may give me, as you please. If it should be less, it would be alright if I should be taking food here tomorrow.'

'That sounds alright,' said Sri Raghavendra Rao and went inside and kept the bundle in a safe place. Then, when he came out to make payment to the cart-man, lo, there was a surprise awaiting him, that was truly spine-chilling. For, neither the bullock cart nor its driver was there and they had disappeared as mysteriously as they had come!

'Who was it, who brought me here and had earlier engaged a cart for me?

Oh Gururaja, I did not realise it then that it was you who told, "It is my job to be present, wherever I am called," in the guise of the cart-man who brought me here!"

As Sri Rao recollected in retrospection everything that the cart-man had spoken, he felt a chillness passing through him. Later, as he went inside and narrated all the happenings to Sri Suyamindra Thirtha, the pontiff instantaneously graced him with his blessings.

When this incident was recounted to me by no less a person than Sri Raghavendra Rao's son, my thoughts were also directed towards Sri Raghavendra, in great veneration and prayer.

It would be interesting to know at this juncture who this Raghavendra Rao was and also the one who bears reference as his son.

Sri Raghavendra Rao was none else than the paternal uncle of Raja Sri Gururajachar and his son, the

already familiar, Sri C.R. Krishnaswami Rao, the Manager of Sri Raghavendraswami Mutt at Thiruvallikkeni.

While Sri Raghavendra has in this episode caused a cart to make its appearance suddenly and has taken Sri Raghavendra Rao safely to his destination, in the next one he stops a running train under mysterious circumstances. This interesting occurrence is covered in the chapter that follows this.

### **THE MIRACLE OF THE STOPPAGE OF A TRAIN**

Bombay Mail is the most convenient train to reach Mantralayam, from Chennai. Leaving Chennai around 10.00 p.m. by that train, one can reach Mantralayam Road station at about 10.30 in the morning, the following day.

Without much strain or loss of sleep, one can alight at Mantralayam Road station on the morrow and be at Mantralayam, before noon.

It was 1945-46. There were only eight days left for the Aradhana celebrations then. Hundreds of devotees were journeying to Mantralayam, even at that time, to be there well in advance of the annual event.

As usual, the Bombay Mail that had left that night with its complement of passengers bound for Mantralayam, reached Adoni around 10.00 A.M., the following day. But strangely, the Railway authorities there did not allow the devotees bound for Mantralayam

detrain at Adoni. (Incidentally, devotees can proceed Mantralayam from Adoni also, as there are buses running from there at regular intervals).

Departing from there at 10.00 A.M., the train arrived Mantralayam Road station at about 11.00 A.M. And here too the passengers were not permitted to get down, despite their request to allow them to alight there, and proceed to Mantralayam.

The train therefore steamed out of the station on its way to Bombay, but mysteriously, after chugging some distance, it came to a grinding halt in the outskirts.

The station authorities were puzzled as to why the train had stopped, despite the line clear signal having been given. They surmised that the movement of some stray cattle along the railway track could have caused the halting of the train. However, even after a considerable length of time there was no sign of the train starting from there.

The driver was then contacted by the station staff and to their surprise he told them, 'It is not known to me why the train has stopped all of a sudden.'

The mechanical systems were then checked and found to be in order. Yet, the train could not move forward and was stuck at that spot. While so, each one started thinking and discussing how the train could be set in motion to run its course.

But, before it starts on its onward journey, let us get absorbed in knowing about the reason for which the train

Every year, for the Mahasamaradhana of Sri Raghavendraswami at the Moola Brindavana and for the celebrations that begin there eight days prior to the Madhya Aradhana day, devotees will gather in large numbers for participation in the ritualistic observances connected therewith.

However, that year the number of pilgrims visiting Mantralayam for that occasion was very less and the head of the Sri Mutt, Sri Suyamindra Thirtha, was also concerned about it.

The reason for the devotees' absence was the quarantine in operation there that had been imposed then on the recommendations of the Health officer of Yemmiganur.

The Collector of Bellary had, as suggested by the Health Officer, passed on instructions for isolating those coming to Mantralayam and preventing their entry into the place, as the areas surrounding Mantralayam were cholera-infected at that time. In accordance with those orders, arrangements had been made for sending back to their places the pilgrims alighting at Adoni and Mantralayam Road stations. Devotees who had come in eager expectation of participating in the Aradhana celebrations were however feeling sad to return to their places.

Sri Suyamindra, the pontiff, thought that without the participation of bhaktas, the Aradhana celebrations would be a lacklustre affair. Therefore he sent his agent, Venkoba Rao, to Bellary.

Venkoba Rao first calls on the Health Officer at Yemmiganur and requests him that he should intervene

and stop devotees being quarantined and sent back in large numbers. The Health Officer, in turn, pleads his inability to do anything about it, since cholera was widespread around Mantralayam. Venkoba Rao, thereafter goes straight to Bellary.

At Bellary, he meets the Collector and most humbly introduces himself as the agent of the Sri Mutt. He then narrates to him most emotionally and in a forceful manner that more than the agony of the devotees (at their not being able to reach Mantralayam), the head of the Sri Mutt was greatly distressed that devotees were not able to be present there for the annual event.

The Collector is speechless!

Venkoba Rao, gathering courage at that point of time, tells the Collector, 'From all over the world, thousands of persons come to Mantralayam and stay for years together to get cured of even their chronic ailments. Sri Raghavendra, as a routine, cures without pain even those diseases that have been given up as incurable (by renowned doctors and modern hospitals equipped with the most sophisticated of equipments), when he is approached by devotees with a resolute mind and utmost faith in his dispensation.

In the circumstances, can it ever be imagined that Sri Raghavendra will allow his devotees to contract cholera, when they come to have his darshan and participate in his Aradhana celebrations?'

'Whatever you say is correct from the religious/spiritual angle. But will it be accepted by the

bound to follow certain rules and regulations. How can we ever violate those?' said the Collector.

'There is nothing wrong in violating rules at times, if such infringement be for the good.'

'It may not be wrong from your view point, but I cannot overlook them.'

'Sir, if you so desire, you can revoke the quarantine order.'

'It is not in my hands, as it is not an order passed of my own volition. It has been implemented on the recommendations of the Health Officer of Yemmiganur. It can be withdrawn only if normalcy is restored.'

'Please do so, Sir. But I have some doubts.'

'Please proceed.'

'You are preventing the entry of devotees, only because of the impending danger of cholera spreading around Mantralayam, is it not?'

'In fact, I did not refuse the permission at all. It is the Health Officer's report that indicates such course of action being taken.'

'Anyway, fearing the spread of the disease, such step has been taken in the best interests of the public, is it not?'

'Exactly.'

'If so, Yemmiganur (where the Health Officer is stationed) and its surrounding villages, are also around Mantralayam, is it not? In fact, even Adoni is not far from



Mantralayam. Therefore, the spread of cholera in these areas among the populace not affected so far, is not improbable and as such an order should have also been passed to isolate and move the unaffected ones, to other places.'

'What are you driving at, please?'

'I mean the epidemic that will affect those coming from outside, can spread amongst the residents too, is it not?'

The Collector is left tongue-tied!

'The British are known for fairness and I am confident that you too will not fail to render justice,' said Venkoba Rao, praising the Collector to the skies.

'But the Health Officer's report.....' started the Collector, triggering Venkoba Rao to intervene and lash out, 'I have been talking to you so much, but my reasonable plea seems to be falling on deaf ears. I can only request you to render justice by rescinding the order that is now in operation. If, however, you fail to do that, Sri Raghavendra will get the needful done and this is beyond doubt. I now take leave of you.' Sri Rao then walked away in a huff and proceeded straight to the house of an acquaintance of his in Bellary.

He was immersed in thoughts about the happenings and started reflecting, 'Have I erred in getting annoyed and pouring forth a volley of words before the Collector? If the pontiff comes to know of this, what will he tell? My lord, why should the epidemic be breaking out now, of all times? But, what if? Most certainly, Sri Raghavendra, who relieves the agony of devotees who come for his

darshan and grace, will not allow them to get infected and fall a prey to the disease that is raising its ugly hood now. Appa, Guru Raghavendra, you only should bring about the necessary change in the outlook of the collector. The disappointment of devotees must be avoided at any cost, Oh, Swami.'

Even as these thoughts were crossing the mind of Sri Venkoba Rao, the collector was set to thinking about the challenge thrown at him, viz. 'If you fail to rescind the order, Sri Raghavendra will get it done by himself'-the words constantly ringing in his ears.

That night, when he sat for his dinner, the Collector could not eat even a morsel of food. He then retired to bed with an empty stomach and in his confused state of mind, he could hardly get a wink of sleep. He was constantly confronted by illusory visions of Venkoba Rao's face and also thoughts about Sri Raghavendra haunted his mind continuously.

Slowly, he began realizing that Venkoba Rao's contention and argument were not devoid of reasoning. And soon this arousal spurred him to make arrangements to send a telegram to the places concerned, communicating the revocation of the order passed earlier.

Knowing that Venkoba Rao was in Bellary itself, the Collector sent for him and informed him also of the action taken. It was then past 10 o'clock in the night.

Venkoba Rao, as soon as he came to know of the steps taken by the Collector, rushed towards Mantralayam and by 6.00 A.M., the next day, informed the pontiff of the good news, in great ecstasy.

It was on the same day that the Bombay Mail had stopped at about 11.00 A.M. at the outskirts of Mantralayam Road station, after the passengers bound for Mantralayam had not been allowed to detrain there-mentioned in the beginning of the chapter.

We have seen earlier that inspite of all the checks carried out by the Railway authorities, they could not know the reason for the stoppage of the train, their efforts to re-start it also proving to be abortive. It was just within half an hour of that struggle that the collector's telegram was received there. And immediately on its receipt, the station authorities permitted the passengers to alight there, much to their delight and elation.

In that atmosphere of joy and awe, the passengers were left wondering and talking among themselves how the quarantine order could have been withdrawn all of a sudden. The Railway official present there, though happy, was however left perplexed for a different reason. He was still wondering why the train had stopped without there being anything wrong in the operational system.

But suddenly it flashed in his mind that it could have been on account of the supernatural powers of Sri Raghavendra only. He felt as if Sri Raghavendra was telling him, 'Look, the Collector is going to send necessary instructions. Therefore, in order not to disappoint the devotees, I have stopped the train.'

Later, he reasoned out to himself that if the train had been halted for that cause, it should also be possible to re-start it by the same token, since the devotees have all detrained and their hearts' desire too has been fulfilled.

Accordingly, he gave instructions to the driver to start the train and no sooner than the latter pressed the starter, it commenced chugging along in its usual flamboyance, to the astonishment of everyone present there. Sri Raghavendra's mysterious powers thus came to be revealed again, through this incident.

Even a long time after the incident, the Railway staff at that station were left discussing about it in great wonderment. Truly, they were baffled by the action of Sri Raghavendra that was beyond the ken of scientific reasoning.

While in this event Sri Raghavendra merely stops a train, in the next chapter we would be coming across the mystery of his performing a rail journey himself. Let us now get absorbed in that fascinating episode.

### **TRAVELS IN A TRAIN, REVEALING HIS MYSTERIOUS POWER**

A devotee of Sri Raghavendra was working in the Railways in Karnataka. He was a Railway guard, always on duty in the running trains.

He was habituated to chanting the Raghavendra stotra everyday, before going to work. On Thursdays, he would take his food only after reciting the stotra 108 times and then leave for his duty.

One day he was to report for duty at 4 P.M. Since it was a Thursday, it was convenient for him to do his puja elaborately that day. As such, he chanted the Raghavendra stotra 108 times and after the usual puja

took his lunch and thereafter spread a dhoti on the floor to have his afternoon siesta, there being ample time for him that day, to enjoy such rest. Soon, he was fast asleep and had not got up even at 4 O' clock, when he should have reported for duty at the station.

It was a little past 5 P.M. when he woke up, and seeing the clock, he was taken aback. Being late, he got ready in a jiffy and reached the station in haste.

At the station, when the stationmaster saw him panting and fretting in his presence, he was astonished and left speechless. He could not make out whether what he was witnessing was a reality or a fantasy.

'It is more than an hour since the train departed, but how is it that you are here now?'

'It is.....'

'Has there been any problem in the train that has caused its stoppage midway? How is it that no message has come? And how have you come here?'

Train, problem, message were the only words the guard heard, but he could not understand anything of what the stationmaster had queried.

'Sir, what are you driving at? I do not follow what you are telling,' said the guard.

'It is only your action that is baffling me,' replied the stationmaster.

'Sir, I am coming from home, only now. After puja and food, I indulged in a catnap, but was soon fast

‘You are confusing me, even more. Are you coming from home, only now?’

‘Yes, Sir.’

‘If so, how did you come here at 4 O’ clock?’

‘How could I have come here, Sir? I had dozed off at home.’

‘If so, am I telling a lie? I had seen you with my own eyes here at 4 P.M. and you had boarded the train and gone on duty as a guard.’

‘Is it so?...’

‘See this register. You only have signed in this.’

The guard, as soon as he saw the roster, fell at the feet of the stationmaster, all of a sudden.

‘What happened, please get up.’

And when he saw the guard getting up with tears blinding his eyes, the stationmaster was really astounded.

‘Sir, please listen to me patiently. You are really a blessed one.’

‘How do you say that, please?’

‘Sir, when I got up from my slumber, it was past 5 O’ clock. And when I rushed here in great perturbation, you are telling me that I have signed the duty register and proceeded on duty in the last train that has left the station. Although I have been chanting the Raghavendra stotra and doing puja all these days, I have not so far had the good fortune of seeing that great saint,

even in my dream. But you have had the grace of having his darshan, in my guise. Truly, it can only be ascribed to the good deeds of your past births - your being blessed with such a darshan. That is why I prostrated before you instantaneously, in great veneration.'

'I acted in the usual way when he was here, thinking that it was you who had come. Oh! I could not know then that it was the renowned saint of Mantralaya who had come, disguised in your form. Although I had darshan of him, it is you who is really the blessed one. It was only for your sake he came in disguise and truly it is the choicest of the blessings one can aspire to have'.

The blessed person that he was, the Railway guard's heart melted at the mercy of Sri Raghavendraswami, who had made his appearance for his sake. Ever thoughtful of that blessing, he soon rushed to Mantralaya, taking leave of absence from his duties.

Some time thereafter, he returned to his place, resigned his job and went back to Mantralaya, to be ever worshipful to Sri Raghavendra, enjoying the privilege of the darshan of his Brindavana, life long.

This incident is not one based on hearsay. It finds mention in a book released in Marathi by the Chief of the Raghavendraswami Brindavan management at Nagpur, in 1980.

Although, in this event, for the sake of one devotee, darshan is given to another person, the manner in which Sri Raghavendra has graced both of them, is indeed

Another incident like this also merits narration. In the incident covered thus far, while those engaged in the same profession get the blessings of the saint, with one of them getting his darshan when the Swami makes his appearance on behalf of the other, in the one following, it is quite a different happening. What we are going to see next is the dialogue between two unacquainted persons centering around Sri Raghavendra and discussing on the improper chanting of a stotra on him. As a result, Sri Raghavendra gives his darshan and through this event a doubt that has long been lingering in the minds of devotees gets clarified. Some of the readers too, may be having such qualms, but how Sri Ruraja clears it should really be absorbing.

### **MORE THAN CHANTING HYMNS, HEADFAST DEVOTION IS SUPREME**

Srimad Raghavendra stotra, composed and considered by Sri Appannacharya, with utmost devotion, is the power of bestowing extraordinary benefits to the devotees chanting it.

Recitation of this hymn will cause all mental disturbances to vanish. So also diseases will cease to exist and happiness will pervade. Fear will be conquered and fortitude developed. Poverty will be extinct, abundance brimming instead.

This composition beginning with the words, 'Sri Gornabodha...' has, as its continuation, the sloka, 'Gopjaya Raghavendraya....'



'Srimad Raghavendra stotra', is in Sanskrit language. Thousands of devotees have benefited by chanting it. For those not knowing that language, the composition has been translated in Tamil and published. (We have also brought out one such compilation, with explanations).

Many have raised this issue (of chanting a stotra in an unknown language), and I have duly shared my thoughts with them.

A lady had written to me, 'While chanting the stotra, I am apprehensive whether the variance in pronunciation could cause a different meaning to the substance of the verses. What can be done about this?'

Another devotee had lamented, 'I am unable to understand Sanskrit, despite efforts. Therefore, I am unable to read even the transliterated words in Tamil. How can I get over this?'

Like this, several letters have flooded my office, particularly about comprehending this stotra.

I have written to a good number of the correspondents saying, 'Don't worry about not being able to pronounce properly. These days there are recorded cassettes available. One may buy such a cassette containing the rendering by a knowledgeable person and playing it, one can chant the verses in accord with the recorded version. Such an effort will, in due course, facilitate getting the whole lot committed to memory'.

But one person replied to me saying, 'I cannot afford to buy a recorded cassette. When I hear devotees at the

It reciting these lines with perfect intonations, it sounds well. But if I try to follow it, I am restrained by the fear that I may commit mistakes in pronunciation.'

I do not know how I should respond to him and have therefore kept quiet. Recently, however, I have been enlightened about the matter - yet another instance to prove that Sri Raghavendra clarifies everything and provides answers to all our doubts.

In front of the Moola Brindavana at Mantralaya, a devotee was once doing Sankalpa seva. While doing the circumambulation, he was uttering the Raghavendra stotra aloud and going around.

He was a person without knowledge of Sanskrit and was chanting the stotra that he had got by heart from reading a transliterated publication in his regional language.

As the devotee was often repeating certain lines of a stotra (before proceeding to the next one), it caught the attention of a pundit who was also going around the Brindavana in circumambulation, at that time.

The learned one could make out from the way the devotee was pronouncing the words of the sloka that he was unfamiliar with the language. And at one stage the pundit lost his patience, when the devotee uttered the words, 'Rajaa chora mahavyaghra sarpa nakradi danam', that was most distressing to him.

The stotra conveys the meaning, 'Repeated chanting of this stotra will ward off any fear of harm from thieves in authority, as also by robbers and the like. So too,

wild beasts like tigers, reptiles such as snakes and poisonous creatures homologous to scorpions, cannot cause any fright.'

The scholarly person, annoyed by the devotee chanting the stotra without comprehending its meaning, stopped him for admonition.

'I say, please repeat the first part of the sloka you have now chanted,' he said.

The devotee responded, saying, 'Raaja Choraa...'

'Please say it again.'

'Raaja Choraa'.

'Stop it please. Instead of pronouncing 'Raja chora', you are telling 'Raaja Choraa', which renders the meaning senseless. Don't you know this?'

'Swami, I do not know that. Had I known, I would not have committed the mistake'.

The learned one continued, 'Without knowing the proper way of pronouncing the words, please do not chant this stotra. Such impropriety will only bring agony to you, rather than causing good.'

The bhakta too, in compliance, stopped uttering the stotra and continued circumambulating the Brindavana in the formal way.

The pundit, heaving a sigh of relief thereafter, felt exhilarated that he had prevented something abominable.

But, the same night, Sri Raghavendra appeared in

'Oh, Vidwan,' said the Guru.

'Gururaja, Gururaja' stammered the scholar.

'I am happy at your scholarship.'

'It is all your blessing, Guru'.

'Be that so. A devotee of mine was engaged in chanting my stotra with great involvement and bhakti. How is it that you stopped him from chanting the slokas?'

'I did it with purpose, Guru. He was uttering those meaningful slokas in an odd manner that sounded rather absurd.'

'Is it so?'

'Yes, Swami. Instead of telling 'Raja chora', he was mentioning 'Raaja chora,' causing vexation to me. That is why I prevented him from chanting further.

Swami, the meaningful composition conveying the theme that its rendering will remove any fear of punishment by the king (or those in authority), has not only been distorted, but also its improper connotation as "Raaja chora" is most reprehensible. As the words "Raaja chora" would carry the implication "king among thieves" or "the king who has indulged in theft," the reference to you in such a manner, though unintentional and oblique, was detestable and therefore I lost my temper and forestalled his reciting the sloka any further.'

'He was rendering it with great devotion. Although unacquainted with the language, there was no pretension in his bhakti and I am pained that what he had been reciting worshipfully from the depth of his heart, was arrested by your action.'

'Swami, I fail to comprehend how the implied reference to you as a king who has indulged in thieving, could be justified.'

'But I have accepted it, since it could be taken that the words are descriptive of Lord Krishna, who, as a child, had indulged in stealing butter. As such, I am sumbitting his prayers at the feet of Lord Krishna.'

'Swami, what an elucidation is this? Really, I have blundered, in ignorance. Please extend your mercy.'

'There is no harm if one cannot recite a stotra or even if the words are incorrectly pronounced, provided there is wholeheartedness and unflinching devotion in the attempt. As such, please ask the devotee to continue chanting the stotra,' said Sri Raghavendra, before disappearing.

Next morning, the learned pundit searched for the devotee and after finding him, caught hold of his hands and shed tears, overcome by emotion.

The vidwan's action surprised the devotee, as he could not understand how the person who had rebuked him the previous day for his inept rendering of the sloka, could have turned out to be different at that moment.

'Oh Sir, without realizing the purity of your devotion, I had scolded you yesterday. Please pardon me for that.'

'Swami, it is not clear to me what you are driving at,' said the devotee to the pundit.

The scholar, in response, informed the bhakta how

enlightened him. He then told him to continue chanting the stotra, whereupon the devotee prostrated before him, instantaneously.

'Why, why I say...'

'Swami, you are the blessed one. You have had darshan of Rayaru....'

'But it is you, who have been instrumental in my having that rare privilege.'

In this manner the two of them were exchanging their pleasantries thereafter.

This episode teaches us that more than the way the stotras are rendered, it is true devotion that is most important for a bhakta.

For the convenience of devotees however, small books on Sri Raghavendra such as Ashtagam, Kavacham and Navaratnamalai, have been released by us in Tamil.

But in the present day world governed by the greed for money, writings on Sri Raghavendra, which we publish with great difficulty and untiring efforts, get copied and released with a few changes, even under the same title. Such publishers can only be described as being ignoble in their outlook and deeds.

It is not my contention that books should not be released on Sri Raghavendra. In fact, if more people write on the saint of Mantralaya, covering new dimensions and projecting altogether different perspectives, I would myself be happy to introduce them through my works, nay even to honour them fittingly.

Be that so, if the slokas on Sri Raghavendra are read even in Tamil, with full knowledge of their import, still the one beginning with the words, 'Sri Poornabodha....' rendered by Sri Appannachar, should be chanted regularly, after knowing the meaning thereof, since it has mysterious powers to confer benefits as mentioned earlier.

In the book titled, 'Sri Raghavendirarin Arputha Mahimaigal,' full meaning of Sri Raghavendra stotra, has been given. After reading the elucidations contained in it, if one should chant the stotra, there will be more interest and involvement in it, speeding up the process of its memorization. Of course, in the beginning it may not be that easy, but in due course, it would not be so.

Adverting to the devotee's action of chanting the stotra, has not Sri Raghavendra approved it although the devotee was not knowing the language in which it had been composed? On this basis should not darshan have been given to him by Sri Raghavendra, rather than to the pundit?

In the same way, could not the Swami have appeared in the devotee's dream and enlightened him to continue chanting the stotra, telling him that what he had been doing was not improper?

Yes, but in that event the devotee would have, the very next day apprised the scholar of the dream that he had, which the latter would have taken as a cock and bull story intended to cover up his folly.

<sup>1</sup> It is undoubtedly for this reason Sri Raghavendra had given darshan to the vidwan and advised him in his

am to tell the bhakta what he had felt about the matter. I surely this is the kind of supreme grace that one can get for.

Sri Raghavendra is one who will shower instantaneous blessings on those who have unwavering faith in him and are resolutely devout towards him. He does not expect one to be at Mantralaya to pray to him, he will extend his grace even to devotees beyond the limits, when the call for help is raised with true devotion.

In the next episode, we come across a person organising cultural shows, who goes to Japan from India and encounters lot of difficulties there. How Sri Raghavendra solves his problems, is something baffling and enthralling.



## MIRACLE IN JAPAN

In part I, in the chapter under the caption, 'Sri Raghavendra in America', the incident relating to the imminent danger to the life of Anwari Madhava Rao and how he was saved from the clutches of Death by the grace of Sri Raghavendraswami have been covered extensively, to lay bare the mystical powers of the saint, which are apparent even after his Brindavanapravesh.

That from any part of the world, if a cry of distress is uttered with true devotion, Sri Raghavendra hastens there to rescue the devotee in trouble, is to be seen in detail in this chapter also.

This event took place in Japan - an interesting occurrence that reveals how Sri Raghavendra extends his helping hand to his devotees in whatever manner



required in the given circumstances, which merciful action and infinite compassion of his that flow out of his genuine concern for his devotees, kindle us to chant his name and glory instinctively and with spontaneity.

Ramkumar was a resident of Mysore, making his living through cultural shows. He was well-accomplished in mono-acting and would enthral the audience by his stage performances.

He was known as Sahasramukhi Ramkumar - the first part of the name having come to stay as an expression in appreciation of his unique technique of presenting varied facial countenances with great ease and felicity, in his stage acting.

Once, a person from Japan had the opportunity of seeing his performance on the stage and he marvelled at the artistry of Ramkumar. But, seeing that the attendance for the show was not up to the mark, thereby affecting the gate collection too, he called aside Ramkumar and had a chat with him.

In the course of his talk, the visitor told Ramkumar that if he would make a trip to Japan, the public there would enjoy his shows, incidentally apprising him also of the modalities connected with foreign travel.

Not long after, Sahasramukhi Ramkumar was heading towards Japan! And on arrival there, he went around places, organizing his stage performances. But even there he could barely make both ends meet and therefore had to move on foot only. While wending his way thus, he would exhibit his skill even in small villages that came in his route.

Once, when he was on the move, he had to cross a forest area. While travelling through the woods, he was walking without any break and at one stage looked around to see whether any village could be sighted in the vicinity. There was none as far as eye could behold and thick vegetation only could be seen in all directions.

From the distance he had covered, he calculated that he may have to proceed another 20 to 30 Kms to reach a safe haven. He was flabbergasted at the enormity of the task and started feeling disturbed, when he realized that there was no human habitat within a close range, to satisfy his hunger and to halt for the night.

The place was devoid of food and water and Ramkumar became worried, as his tongue dried up and hunger started pinching his stomach. And as it started getting dark, even the faint glimmer of hope in him started receding.

Soon it became pitch dark and he was not in a position to move ahead, even an inch. He collapsed to the ground in fatigue and exhaustion, ere long.

As he was slowly losing consciousness, he reflected, 'Gururaja, is it for this I have come beyond the seas. I came here only to make my living. But it looks as if this is an invitation to me from the God of death. I am certain I will not survive. But I am not worried about death and what is causing concern to me is that if I should die here as an orphan at this God-forsaken place bereft of human habitation, my vestiges will be left exposed to birds and animals, to feast upon. Should I meet such an end and are my sins so oppressive as to warrant such a harsh punishment?'

And lo, a little later, Ramkumar felt the splashing of water on his face and as he opened his eyes, Sahasramukhi could not believe what he espied!

It was a hut and a lantern was burning there. In the dimly lit surroundings, an orchard with fruit trees and flower plants could be seen there. A pleasant breeze was blowing there at that time and Ramkumar could realize that he was lying on a cot. And when he turned his look around, he could see a well-built Japanese standing by his side.

Even as Ramkumar was asking him, 'What are all these....?', the Japanese moved towards him a couple of containers holding milk and fruits, asking him to consume them.

Ramkumar needed them badly at that time. The fruits were of different kinds and they all tasted like nectar to him then. And as he consumed the flavoury milk and the variety of fruits provided to him, he felt sleepy due to weariness and slowly sunk on the cot.

'I had lost my consciousness in a thick wood. But this place looks like a garden. How have I come here? Is all this a fantasy or reality? How can it be otherwise? I am wide awake now. I could not see such cottage earlier. If I had swooned in a place where there was movement of people, somebody could have resuced me and brought me here. But I had fainted in a forest area, where there was no pathway even. Alright, let me at least ask this Japanese about it,'

So thinking, when Ramkumar turned around, he instinctively felt the person telling him, 'The place you

want to go to is nearby only. Please take complete rest now and you may go there in the morning.' Ramkumar was soon fast asleep.

It was the next morning! The buzzing of some insects was ringing in his ears. The sun was spreading its rays in all its splendour and when he felt the glare of it before him, Ramkumar slowly woke up from his slumber. And as he looked around with eyes wide open, he was taken aback in a moment. For, he found himself to be lying in the same place where he had lost his consciousness slowly on the preceding day, when it had become dark. He could make out nothing, in those strange surroundings.

He then got up and looked in all directions. And surely it was the same place where he was overcome by exhaustion, late in the evening the previous day. So he started thinking, 'How did I find myself in a cottage? Where is it now? Or, how did I go there? I had both fruits and milk for the night. I am familiar with the looks of the Japanese. Where from did that well-built Japanese come there? Guru Raghavendra, what a mystery is this?'. Puzzled thus, he started walking in the forest.

After covering more than 20 Kms through a densely wooded area, he arrived at a village. There he explained to the residents about his strange experience of the night and enquired of them where such place was.

'Look, however much you keep on telling us, it appears to be incredulous. None of us has gone that way, that too alone. We have not come across any grove of fruit trees or a garden-like place, anywhere around there or in the nearby villages,' they said with conviction.

Sahasramukhi, on hearing those words, became excited and uttered in great awe, 'Ah Gururaja, Gururaja.'

He was, thereafter, constantly pondering and rejoicing, 'Oh Swami, it is indeed great of you to have responded to the call of this humble person and rushed to his help, from across the seas.'

The event narrated here had taken place about six decades ago and Sahasramukhi Ramkumar himself has recounted these happenings after his return from Japan to the then pontiff of the Sri Mutt, Sri Suyamindra Thirtha, most emotionally. He met the pontiff at Mantralaya, to where he rushed immediately after his arrival at Mysore, in eager expectation of having darshan of the great one who had been responsible for his survival - more importantly to worship him with gratefulness at heart. Truly, Ramkumar was in tears when he prostrated before the Brindavana of Sri Raghavendra, visualising in his mind's eye the precarious condition that he was in and how he had been rescued from such a situation, by the grace of Sri Raghavendraswami.

The pontiff of the Sri Mutt was also thrilled and awed by the mysterious powers of Sri Raghavendra, when he heard about the strange occurrences related by Ramkumar.

It is not in Japan alone, but in Ethiopia too, that Sri Raghavendra has caused mysterious things to happen. We shall move on to the next chapter to know about those.

**THE ETHIOPIAN WONDER CREATED  
BY SRI RAGHAVENDRA**

There was a devout family in the Seethapathi Agraharam, in Bangalore. The members of the family, three in number - parents and the daughter - were always worshipful of Sri Raghavendra.

The head of the family was ever prayful that his daughter should get a suitable life-partner. His prayers were soon answered and the girl was married off to an acceptable bridegroom, employed in Ethiopia.

The parents, though uneasy about sending their daughter away to a far off place, felt consoled that she would at least be happy in the company of a good husband.

After the marriage and her departure to Ethiopia, the daughter was in constant touch with her parents through letters, often expressing her happiness about the cheerful life and pleasant time she had over there. The parents too felt relieved and contented that their daughter was leading an enviable life abroad.

In due course, the daughter came to Bangalore for confinement and during her pregnancy the elders looked after her with great care and affection.

Soon, she delivered a beautiful child.

The jubilant parents were doubly happy, when their son-in-law flew in from Ethiopia and spent some time with them, soon after the birth of the child.

After a few months, they sent their daughter and the newborn to Ethiopia, to join their son-in-law.

Later, in the unaccustomed alien land, the baby fell ill within a short time, having developed a boil on its face that kept on growing and becoming larger. The doctors of course treated the condition, but instead of improvement, there was only deterioration, as more and more boils appeared one after the other, rendering an ugly look to the face.

Despite best medical assistance, there was no progress at all and so the daughter was constrained to write to her parents in detail about the suffering of the child.

The father, on seeing the letter, was disturbed and started ruminating, 'There must be good doctors in Ethiopia and still the child's illness has not been cured, why is it so? What can be done by us from here? Only a letter comforting and cheering them up, can be sent from here. But can it really relieve the child of its agony? What is the way to solve this?

Why, there is Gururaja of course! What more is required than his grace and succour, in such dire circumstances?'

The thought about Sri Raghavendra's benevolence pepped up the father and after prayers to the Guru, he took a small quantity of the mrithika of Sri Raghavendra's Brindavana and sent it by post to the daughter, explaining in his letter the method of using it.

The parents of the child took the mrithika with them and showed it to the doctors who had treated their child,

But the doctors were not convinced and they assertively said in a chorus, 'Is this to be applied externally and taken also as a medicine? Why are you so childish? This is mere mud and if this is to be stirred in water and the mixture applied on the face of the child, the intensity of the boil will only aggravate. Please don't indulge in such experiments that may lead to complications.'

The parents were however adamant and responded, 'Don't think this is ordinary mud. This is Sri Raghavendra's mrithika and is known for its mystical powers. Today the Brindavanas of Sri Raghavendra are coming up everywhere and imagine the importance of the mrithika if it should also be getting consecrated with the Brindavana. That Sri Raghavendra's divine powers are contained even in his mrithika, is nothing but truth and several wonders have taken place due to the power of the mrithika.'

'It may be so. But don't play with the life of the child. These experiments should be confined to your place and not tried here.'

'No doctor. You have tried so many treatments, but there is no sign of improvement. Please therefore permit us to use the mrithika. And after all the child is ours'.

'If so, we leave it to your wish,' said the doctor. And as soon as they heard this, the parents started using it on the child, after prayers to Sri Raghavendra.

There was however no improvement for 10 days.

'Gururaja! It appears the doctors' opinion will prove to be right! With how much faith has my father sent this.



ase don't belie our hopes and aspirations, as we have t permission from the doctors with great difficulty only,' nented the couple.

The mrithika treatment was continued and after 40 ys the boils in the face of the child started subsiding d the face became brighter.

The doctors would not believe this. They wondered w mysterious it was and were intrigued as to whether re mrithika could have so much powers.

The daughter then informed her father residing at ngalore, about the supernatural powers of Sri ghavendra.

We have seen in detail in Part I how Sri Raghavendra es mrithika to a disciple and blesses him to come after formance of his marriage (in a grand style) and to at extent the sishya benefits out of such mercy.

We shall be seeing another incident like this, next. A y who had no faith or devotion at all is saved from a dicament by the power of the mrithika - engineered by Raghavendra. We shall see it now.

## **MRITHIKA CAUSES MENTAL CHANGE!**

One S.N. Kembhavi was having fertilizer business in ili. He was also a producer of certain kinds of pposts.

Though enjoying affluence, he was ever remorseful his wife was not drawn towards Sri Raghavendra, e he was a zealous devotee of the saint.

His attempts to change her outlook were in vain, as used to respond, 'This is my personal affair. Please not compel me, as devotion should spring out of one's heart spontaneously. I cannot be indulging in it just for my sake. Such worship will only be a hoax.

To put it explicitly, I have great attachment towards the cow in our house, but you don't have that much. Your attitude towards the animal is that after all it has to yield milk and it is okay so long as it does that. But have I ever tried to prevail over you in this matter?'

However, Kembhavi was a regular visitor to Mantralaya every year, though he would be going there alone.

On one occasion, he prayed to Sri Raghavendra with intense feelings and great devotion, submitting, 'Oh Raghavprabho, you have graced so many and turned them towards a better life. You know that despite my riches, I am coming here alone, to worship you. Next time, I want my wife also to be here with me. Even after my explaining things to her, she has not developed the faith that should be inherent in her. Last time, when I was here, I took the Panchthika to my place and explained its sanctity and its mysterious powers to her. She heard everything and just said, "Everything sounds interesting." But my wife is truly a virtuous lady with good deportment - always adaptive to my needs - and if only she develops faith in you and comes devoted....'

After praying and worshipping thus, he returned to Mantralaya and engaged himself in his business activities, as usual.

Kembhavi's wife had made it a habit to see her much loved animal every morning, as soon as she woke up. And only after that she would attend to her daily chores.

One day, when she got up, she found the cow lying listless and knocked out. She became alarmed and then raised a cry of agony that brought Kembhavi rushing to the garden.

'Please see our cow...'

'Oh, it is frothing and foaming at the mouth....'

'Yes please, the foaming of saliva from the mouth is indicative of snake-bite and I am really scared of its present condition.'

'Alright, you be here, I shall telephone to the veterinarian and return soon.'

The lady, getting closer to the cow, looked at it and said in a frightened tone, 'There seems to be no need for it. See, it is motionless and it appears it is beyond human efforts to retrieve it now.'

'But then what else can be done now, its fate is like that'.

'Please don't say that. You pray to Sri Raghavendra'.

'Oh, what has it got to do with this?'

'If not, please give at least the mrithika you have kept at home'.

'What can mrithika do?'

'Please don't tell that way. You only have told sixteen times about its powers and I am beginning to have faith in it now. Please give it.'

Kembhavi could not believe what he had heard, and was wondering whether it was his wife who was talking in such a vein.

Still, thinking of Gururaja, he brought the mrithika in inside, stirred it in water and both of them slowly poured it in the mouth of the animal. But they were alarmed when it did not get inside and tried again to make the cow swallow the water containing the mrithika in it. And lo, in a few moments the cow suddenly got up and stood, much to the joy and relief of the couple. Hailing Sri Rghavendra, the Kembhavis rushed outside and prostrated before the picture of Sri Gururaja in great ecstasy.

And from the next year onwards, Kembhavi's wife also started visiting Mantralaya, with her husband.

This occurrence took place around 1950-51. At that time, Honourable Minsiter Gadgil was in the Central Ministry and S.N. Kembhavi was the son-in-law of that renowned personality.

The incident that took place was undoubtedly an engineered one by Sri Rghavendra, as a result of Kembhavi's prayers to him, to reveal his supernatural powers to his wife and correct her outlook. Sequel to this happening, Kembhavi's wife also became an ardent devotee.

In the next chapter, we are to come across a person who was a non-believer, always propagating the theory

that there is no God and castigating those following Divine worship, as uncivilized beings. He was a pagan for thirty two years, but suddenly becomes a great devotee of Sri Raghavendra and swears that till his last breath he would be uttering Raghavendra nama and singing the glory of that Divine personality. And true to that, he has been ever since rendering discourses on the greatness of Sri Raghavendra and singing hymns on him like a Haridasa.

How the change in him came about, as also the infinite mercy extended to him by Sri Raghavendra, are truly spell binding and follow in the next chapter.

The one who had thus been graced by Sri Raghavendra is none else than Balraj of Jolarpettai, who has already figured earlier. And so, we move on to the next interesting episode.

### **JOLARPETTAI BALRAJ GRACED!**

In the chapter on Kamalakar Joshi, mention had been made about Jolarpettai Balraj - a pagan, who has, by quirk of fate, turned into an ardent devotee of Sri Raghavendra - now given to singing the praise of the Saint of Mantralaya and spreading his greatness, as his life's mission.

We are to see in the pages that follow, the awe-inspiring incidents connected with Balraj.

It really melts our heart, when we think of the bountiful grace of Sri Raghavendra that radiates in several ways to benefit his devotees. Balraj is a

privileged one and an elevated soul that way, by the mercy of Sri Raghavendra. Our mind therefore gets automatically attracted towards him.

That Sri Raghavendra is above considerations like caste, creed and status, in extending his mercy and compassion, has been revealed in several of the mysterious happenings we have come across, that have taken place as a result of his Divine powers.

We have already seen such broad outlook and social concern being exhibited even by Sri Vyasaraja (the earlier birth of Sri Raghavendra), in his acceptance of Sri Kanakadasa, a lowly born, as his disciple, thereby enlightening mankind that like Kanakadasa, all of us are Harijans or Hari's humanity (meaning children of Lord Narayana).

The Balraj we are going to know about here, is also one born in a socially neglected class. In his younger days, he was indulging in denigration of God, condemning Divine worship. But now his unique way of extolling the glory of Sri Raghavendra in Kathakalakshepas (stage renderings), brings about a transformation, even in the stone-hearted ones.

How Sri Raghavendra has caused this metamorphosis in Balraj, is truly marvellous.

To those praying to him from the innermost recesses of their hearts, with total faith and absolute surrender, Sri Raghavendra never fails to extend his grace and this has been amply highlighted time and again in the various chapters preceding this. Balraj too submits like that to Sri Gururaja and having been graced by him, he himself is now in the exalted position of being revered by many.

Moving on to the episode, Balraj, the atheist, had a very devout and God-fearing companion, whom he held dear to his heart. Though poles apart in their principles, they both were inseparables, attached to each other, most faithfully and affectionately.

They will go to the temple together, but Balraj will be waiting patiently till his friend completed his worship and came out.

The friend would have with great devotion performed puja (worship of the Lord by chanting His glory), but outside, Balraj would rebuke him with derision.

Still, this variance in outlook had never caused any rupture in their affinity. Although Balraj was ridiculing his friend day in and day out, the latter would seldom go to the temple without the company of Balraj and so too the former was never inclined to move away from his pal, the reason of dissimilarity in their perceptions on divine worship.

They will go together to the place of worship and everyday the mocking of the devout one by the atheist and, will take place, as a routine.

While so, Balraj once suffered severe pain in the stomach. Medication was of no avail and the friend could not bear the sight of Balraj squirming in pain.

It came to be known then that there was a good doctor at Hospet. So, Balraj was taken there under compulsion and given treatment, resulting in some improvement.

Balraj, after the course of treatment was over, asked his friend, 'Shall we get back to our place now?'

'No Balraj, we have to go to another place,' said the friend.

'Perhaps there is some temple nearby and you want to see it, is it not?'

'Oh, how did you guess that?'

'Do I not know what will run through your mind? You have all good qualities, but this craze of yours to visit temples seems to have oversaturated in you. I again reiterate that worshipping in temples is not only a waste of time, but also involves squandering of money'.

'It is not so Balraj. Your notions are absolutely fallacious. But it is not a temple we are visiting now. We are in fact going to set our foot at a holy place, to have darshan of a great saint who is still alive there'.

'Ha! Ha! In our place too, there are saintly persons living and we can think of seeing them there. Earlier, you used to tell me only of temples and tanks, but now you are spinning yarn about certain other holy places and saintly persons.'

'Yes, we shall be having darshan of Sri Raghavendra, who had entered his Brindavana alive about 300 years ago. We are in fact going to Mantralaya now to see that Brindavana and have the blessings of the Swami'.

'Oh, what a story is this! Is he alive there for the last 300 years? Let us see that. This time I shall definitely come inside the place'.

Accordingly, both travelled to Mantralaya from ospet and after taking bath in the Tungabhadra, went



inside the precincts of the Brindavana, to have darshan of it.

The devout friend, with folded hands and deep veneration at heart, walked slowly towards the Brindavana, with the thought, 'Gururaja how powerful is your influence! Balraj, who usually stands outside, has been drawn into your holy shrine, undoubtedly by your mysterious power only.'

Balraj was close behind his friend then and not much rush was there at that time, affording them ample time to have good darshan of the Brindavana.

The God-fearing friend, spontaneously and with tears in his eyes, prayed to Sri Raghavendra, 'Gururaja how nice it would be if Balraj, who has such a good heart is blessed also with Godliness and devotion. I look to you only Swami, to bring about such a change in him'.

He then turned around and said, 'Balraj, this is the Brindavana of Sri Raghavendra,'

'I say, what is this - an elevated structure, looking so odd! How do you worship this as God.....', responded Balraj.

'Leave it please. We shall discuss about it later, as there are people getting inside and it is time for us to make room for others.' So saying, the friend dragged Balraj towards the exit gate, from the crowd of devotees surging there.

'No please. You told me he is still alive. Please come inside again and show him to me,' said Balraj, pulling his friend towards the Brindavan.

And as the devout one was praying from his heart, 'Gururaja! Have you not heard my friend's words?', Balraj, all of a sudden, burst out, 'I say, what is this? This Brindavana of yours, which you are holding so dear to your heart, is swaying this way and that .....

'What, truly? And where.....?' stammered the friend in great perplexity.

'Look there, I say. See how it is wobbling. Even the flower garlands decorating the Brindavana are swinging there....'

'I am not able to see it, Balraj.'

'Do you think I am telling a lie? Is there any ball-bearing in concealment, that is causing such oscillation - why, it is rocking like a Thanjavur doll!'

On hearing these words, a devotee from behind (one belonging to Thanjavur) came rushing and asked Balraj in great excitement, 'What! Are you able to see the Brindavana shaking? Oh, how fortunate you are,' holding his hands tightly. He then continued, 'Appa, these are not hands - I consider them your holy feet that deserve veneration. Indeed you are a blessed one to have had darshan of Sri Raghavendra.'

Balraj could not, however, understand anything of what he heard.

In the past, the Brindavana had shaken for the sake of Vadindra Thirtha, but now its rocking was for blessing Balraj. But poor Balraj could not know its significance then.

When Sri Vadindra had extolled the greatness of Sri

composition as "Gurugunastavana", the Brindavana had wobbled then to signify the blessings of Sri Raghavendra to both the author and his poetic composition. Besides, Sri Ragavendra had also blessed Vadindra Thirtha to get entombed near him in the Brindavana left vacant there from his time - gracing him in his own mysterious way.

That he had been blessed by Sri Gururaja in a similar manner, was beyond the understanding of Balraj at that point of time. However, he could feel something strange happening in him.

And the quaint feeling in him continued even after reaching his place. Quite inexplicably, he was often pondering about Mantralaya and could not make out why his thoughts were hovering around that place.

Being obsessed thus, he thought that a change of place would be refreshing for him in that mental state. And when he was contemplating upon such a sojourn, another friend came there and suggested a visit to Mantralaya, when he heard from Balraj that he was planning to go out for a short stay at some far away place.

Balraj was taken aback when this friend too had Mantralaya in his mind and had suggested that as a place worth going to. He was therefore led to think, 'When I am trying to forget about Mantralaya, this person also is suggesting the same place as worth visiting. Well, what could be the force attracting people to that place? Let me therefore go there again and see.'

Accordingly, a date was fixed for going to Mantralaya and the friends started on their journey that day.

Later, as the train was approaching Mantralayam Road station, Balraj became very ill, his temperature shooting up to abnormal limits. And when he alighted there, he was all of a sudden suffering from high fever and shivering of the body. His friend became alarmed about the sudden indisposition of Balraj and hurriedly took him to Mantralaya by the next available bus.

At Mantralaya, he fixed a room for their stay and made Balraj lie on a cot, covering him with thick blankets, as the chillness was unbearable for him.

'Aiyo, I will be dead and cannot hope to survive,' cried Balraj in the agony of his illness.

'Don't say that Balraj. Sri Raghavendra will not let you down.'

'No, why should I have got this illness? I was alright before and now it looks as if I may not survive.'

'Balraj, you please take rest and sleep, you will be alright soon.'

Balraj, on the contrary, could not doze off, but in the end it was uncontrollable for him and sleep got the better of him even as he started pondering, 'Is it because I derided Raghavendra that he is wreaking vengeance on me? Oh, how can it be? When it is my belief that the very existence of God is imaginary, how odd and foolish it is to think that he is punishing me. Or, could it be that he is still alive? Well, Raghavendra, let there be an understanding between us! I have never fallen ill like this; so far. This fever that I am suffering from has created fear of death in me and appears to be something unnatural. My inner conscience tells me that I may not survive. But if you

ould save me from this predicament and what appears be certain death for me, I will concede that you are still ve. Not only that, I shall also devote the rest of my life to e chanting of your nama and singing your praise, till the ngue gets tied in my death. This is a vow that I am aking, at your place.'

It was 3 A.M.! Balraj was fast asleep then. But even in it slumber, Balraj suddenly felt somebody hitting him in back that made him open his eyes and look at his end sleeping by his side. The friend was in deep mber too, but Balraj, thinking that he was pretending be so, woke him up and shouted, 'I say, how dare you to hit me and pretend to be sleeping also?'

The companion, on hearing these words, was wildered and shot back, 'Balraj, what has happened to i! Has the fever aggravated and caused something to i? When I have not hit you at all, how do you say that i received a blow?'

Balraj then showed his back to his friend and said, e this...'

'Oh God, the imprint of all five fingers is seen on your k. But there is no one else in this room, except you l. How could someone have hit you? It is really elievable,' said the friend, stroking Balraj's back tly. And at that moment he realised from the warmth ne body that the fever had come down appreciably. raj too could know from the condition of his body that fever was receding as fast as it had spread in his em, earlier.

By dawn, Balraj's temperature had come down to normal and he could think in a flash what he had supplicated and vowed to Sri Raghavendra.

Soon after, he had his bath in the Tungabhadra and was in front of the Brindavana, giving vent to his feelings and praying, 'Gururaja, henceforth I am your servant! I shall ever be subservient to you from now onwards, as you have fulfilled my desire, answering my prayer. I shall not definitely break my vow and this is a promise I make before you. I shall, from this moment, engage myself in spreading your greatness and extolling your glory'. And true to that, Balraj is unrelenting to this day in abiding by what he had sworn to, before Sri Raghavendra.

Oh, what a pleasant experience it would be, if one were to hear Balraj rendering the life story of Sri Raghavendra with musical notations, to the accompaniment of instrumentalists! During such stage performances, he identifies himself with the characters in the various episodes and in his monodacting he would portray their emotions in the most natural way.

A non-believer getting transformed in this manner and being endowed with such artistry, can only be attributed to the grace and benevolence of Sri Raghavendraswami, whose infinite compassion is matchless.

After this experience, Balraj started worshipping a picture of Sri Raghavendra (purchased for him by his friend, in Mantralaya) and has converted the front room in his house as a puja room, keeping the picture there

conspicuously. On Thursdays, puja and bhajans would be conducted in a grand manner, drawing the people around.

Sri Sujayeendra Thirtha, the then pontiff of the Sr Mutt at Mantralaya, has performed the holy incantation ritual, initiating Balraj into Divine worship and conduct of pujas.

Ever since that blessing by Sujayeendra Thirtha Balraj has been following the religious practices very meticulously and has established a seva mandali (an association for Divine Service.) He has since been adoring Sri Raghavendraswami very devoutly and in the prescribed manner, at his place.

Sri Raghavendra, who has cast his magical influence on the life of Balraj, has been working miracles in the lives of even those who have been in association with Balraj in rendering devotional service. They are not just one or two, but a good many in number.

Balraj once went with his friends to a place called Uthukkuli, on getting information that the physical impression of Sri Raghavendra's feet had suddenly appeared in a house there and was apparent to those wanting to see it at the spot of its advent. Strangely, while all others were able to espy it and worship with exuberance, Balraj alone was left standing there in perplexity.

Yes, the imprint of those Divine feet were not visible to him alone!

Balraj returned home dejectedly, grieving, 'Gururaja! What is this trial for me? Do I not deserve to have

darshan of your footprints that are seen by all others? Oh, why am I being punished like this?'

Employed in the Railways, Balraj stays in the Railway colony at Jolarpettai. The door number of his house is 49-A, situated in the second street, Idayampatti. The house itself had been constructed about five decades ago and the puja room in that house has a cement flooring.

After return from Uthukkuli, Balraj had to get up at 4 A.M. the following day, to go for his work. Since he had come home with a heavy heart the previous night and had not slept during journey, even the night before that, he was in deep slumber in the wee hours of that night. And when he woke up suddenly before dawn, he had little time even for taking his bath. As such, he got ready hurriedly, to go for his duty.

He entered the puja room at that early hour of the morning (without taking his bath) and after stepping inside, started thinking why he had gone there, questioning himself whether he was there of his own accord or had been led there by some unknown influence dragging him inside - his inner conscience telling him that a mysterious power was guiding his action then.

He then felt his inner voice telling him, 'Balraj, look down, see there below....' And the next instant, Balraj eyed below and could only catch a glimpse of the usual puja materials and the familiar cement flooring that had been laid there decades ago.

Thinking it to be a figment of his imagination, he went



was amazed and left pleasantly surprised at what he beheld there. He could not make out immediately whether it was something illusory or real.

Yes, in the space between his legs, and on the old cement flooring, he could see the impression of two holy feet, facing the picture of Sri Raghavendra there!

Balraj, in uncontrollable ecstasy, cried aloud, 'Oh, abho, is it for this reason you did not reveal the imprint of your holy feet to my eyes at Uthukkuli - is it for leaving a permanent vestige of yours in my humble abode that you have contrived it so! Oh, how merciful you have been to me!'

The holy footprints of Sri Raghavendra are still in existence in Balraj's puja room and are open for darshan to those going to his house in Jolarpettai. Balraj has plans to install a Brindavana of Sri Raghavendra at Jolarpettai and is desirous of sanctifying the holy footprints also, by moving them from the place at which they now appear (along with the cement flooring on which they exist), to

Brindavana proposed to be constructed and consecrated.

Like this, there are several other mysterious happenings in the life of Balraj and some of them have been published in "Om Sakthi" of April 1993.

Balraj's experience bears testimony to what I have been stressing all through - that steadfast belief in Sri Raghavendra and worship of him will bestow every happiness to those devoted to him.

Sri Raghavendra has graced both Kamalakar Joshi and Balraj. While Joshi belonged to an upper class, Balraj is from a socially backward class. But without knowing the significance of such incidents, there are a few people who have certain misgivings and in their confused thinking mislead other also.

A lady who had such disoriented thinking has written to me how she got out of the quagmire and became clear in her perception. Her experiences, as related in her letter, are contained in the next chapter.

### **CONFUSION CLEARED**

I recently had a letter from one Smt.Maragatham, from a place called Ninnakkarai.

'I read your "Raghavendra Mahimai". It is only by the grace of Sri Raghavendra that I am now clear in my mind.....' were the introductory observations the letter carried.

Smt.Maragatham was a well-to-do person and had not suffered misery, till her marriage. After the wedlock, however, she had to confront some problems, arising out of maladjustment with the spouse. Against this backdrop (of the kind of family life they led) her husband brought a picture of Sri Raghavendra to their house and started doing puja to it. Not only that, he was often sermonizing to her about Sri Raghavendra, in the hope that she would also start worshipping him. But the expectation was belied, as his wife could not be drawn towards Sri Raghavendra. On the contrary, her reaction was one of repulsion.

'How can one who severs his family ties, leaving his wife to undergo hardship and separation, be revered as a saint? Without understanding the feelings of the spouse, if one were to become a recluse, is such a person worthy of veneration?' In this manner she was often poking fun at her husband's action of being worshipful towards Sri Raghavendra. But she was herself a person habituated to meditation, which she followed meticulously in her own way.

Once, when there was a misunderstanding between the two, the husband deserted her and darted out of the place at night, in the cloak of darkness. Smt.Maragatham could not control her grief and started weeping at the dead of the night. But soon, sleep got the better of her and she lied down with her daughter, closing her eye-lids. The thought that Sri Raghavendra was the cause for her distress, was uppermost in her mind, at the time she dozed off to sleep.

It was not only the husband, but also a friend of hers, who was responsible for Smt.Maragatham developing an animosity towards Sri Raghavendra. The friend had misguided her that Sri Raghavendra graces only the Brahmins and caste, creed, religion and linkages of earlier births were the criteria by which he reckoned his devotees as being worthy of his blessings.

That night, Smt.Maragatham had a dream! A venerable old man in ochre robes appears in the dream, holding a cow and leading it before her. He tells her, 'You should ask only knowledgeable persons about the lives of saints. Please try to know my life history in full. You will

then understand how I had treated my wife. Get enlightened and cleared of your misgivings. Divert your mind towards me in devotion and your problems will get solved.' Smt.Maragatham was woken up by this strange experience and when she opened her eyes, it was 3.45 A.M.

'I could not understand anything then. But I got up immediately and washed my hands and feet. There was a sudden change in me at that time and I could feel reassured and confident. At once, I sat in meditation and involuntarily started uttering, "Om Sri Raghavendraya Namaha".

After that bizarre occurrence, I soon visited the Brindavana of Sri Raghavendra in Dasarathapuram, Chennai. There I recounted to the chief priest what all had happened to me and it was he who later told me about your book.

I chanced to read your book thus - it was not a mere perusal - but actually I am not in a position to express the feelings I had after going through it.

Till date, I have lived as blind, though endowed with sight, as deaf, despite possessing hearing ability and as a dumb, regardless of being blessed with the gift of speech.

Oh, what an exalted one he is! He is truly a Divine personality! An ocean of Mercy and embodiment of Righteousness and Peace! Without knowing about him, I have wasted much of my life. Oh, how very compassionate he has been towards me, in lifting me from the morass of sins. Every minute of my life, he has

caused in me changes for the better and moulded me to a level of perfection that has amazed most people. And on 23.6 .94, myself and my husband went to Mantralaya, stayed there for three days and returned with contentment at heart.' So ended the letter written in her own hand.

It could be inferred from this episode that Sri Raghavendra has given darshan to the lady who had no faith in him, only because he wanted them both (the husband and the wife) to shed away their differences and come together to lead a happy life. Besides, he must have felt that the divergent views they held about worshipping him should not have been the causative factor for their separation. It could also be said that the prayers of the husband to guide his wife in the right path, inculcating bhakti in her mind, have been answered by Sri Raghavendra appropriately, in these happenings.

I would like to reiterate and emphasize again in this context that Sri Raghavendra has no considerations of caste, creed or religion and that he is above such prejudices. While extending his grace, he does not also see whether the beneficiary is one who has faith in him or is of the impious type. During his mundane existence, it was the Mohammedans who had gifted to him vast tracts of land and villages (including Mantralaya), besides conferring on him the title "Jagathguru". Like these, numerous instances can be cited to vouch that Sri Raghavendra is common to all people, nay to the entire mankind itself.

Moving on to the next episode, there was a great devotee of Sri Raghavendra who had a servant by name

Anwar, in his house. How Sri Raghavendra gives darshan to that Anwar is a wonderful occurrence that follows in the next chapter.

**HE WILL COME IN PERSON  
OR IN DREAMS!**

Chitaldurg is the place where Sri Raghavendra had caused a disciple of his to attain Moksha (liberation). We have known about this incident in a detailed manner in Part I.

Bhakti of the sublime kind was in evidence in that episode. The disciple, without any demur or hesitation, jumps in the fire in Agni kunda, in strict obedience to what his Guru tells him to do, for attainment of liberation. And so it happens too, when he enters the fire!

In Chitaldurg of such fame, there lived one Nagaraja Rao, who was an affluent person, engaged in the business of film distribution. He was an ardent devotee of Sri Raghavendra.

Often he would go to Bangalore, in connection with his avocation.

Sri Nagaraja Rao had a domestic servant by name Anwar. He was a very affectionate and submissive type, ever willing to do his chores in the manner expected of him.

On one occasion, when his master had gone to Bangalore, Anwar was sweeping and swabbing the house. He would generally do such cleaning in all

portions of the house, except the puja room and the kitchen. As such, he had no occasion to even have a peep into the puja room, till then.

That day, as Anwar was swabbing the floor, he suddenly heard someone walking there. And when he lifted his head, lo there was great astonishment for him. For, he could see a saintly person standing there, dressed in saffron clothing and holding a holy vessel in his hand.

‘Appa, move aside,’ he said and started streaming on the floor the water contained in the vessel, advancing his steps on the wet surface (as is the religious practice allowed by the orthodox Brahmins).

‘My master is not in town, please.....’

‘Let him come,’ said the visitor and continued to advance. Anwar could not understand anything and was left bewildered. But he followed the sanyasi upto the puja room and when he stepped inside the precincts, Anwar refrained from entering the holy confines and kept himself at a distance.

He then reflected, ‘Oh, what can be done now? Is he really a monk or an imposter in the garb of a saint? These are days when nobody can be trusted. If a holy person were to really visit the house, the master would have certainly been at home. He would not have sent others of station, nor would he have gone himself to Bangalore. At least he would have informed that such a holy person would be coming and that he should be well looked after.

It appears the person who has gone inside the puja room is a trickster and not a genuine one of the monastic order. Therefore, he should not be allowed to go away from there.' With these thoughts, Anwar locked the puja room hurriedly and put the key in his pocket securely.

Even after this, his anxiety and excitement did not subside. So, he got in touch with his master by telephone at the usual place of his stay in Bangalore, informing him everything and suggesting his immediate return.

The master of the house, alarmed at what he heard, came to Chitaldurg at once. On reaching home, he took the key from his servant and opened the puja room to see the person whom Anwar had locked inside. But there was nobody there!

'Anwar, there is no one inside', he said.

'I am sure, I locked him inside,' responded Anwar.

'Come here, Anwar. Have you definitely seen him going inside this room?'

'Yes, sir. A short while after my locking him inside the room, I could hear the ringing of bell there - the one that is usually sounded at the time of puja.'

On hearing these words, Nagaraja Rao was left speechless. He could also see evidence of someone having performed puja there, not long before. All these were strange and unimaginable for him.

'Did you ask his name?'

'No, he did not tell. Even as I was preventing his entry inside, he kept on moving into the room.'



‘At least, how did he look like?’

‘He had the look of a Sanyasi.’

‘Can you tell me whom he resembled?’

‘Look there please, he appeared like the one whose picture is hanging in the puja room.’

‘Please have a close look at that picture and tell me further.’

‘Sir, I have never entered the puja room so far, nor have I seen this picture any time before. I think I have erred in telling that the person who had come looked like the one in this picture.’

‘What are you telling, Anwar?’

‘What I mean is that it is the same person in this picture, who had come here,’ clarified Anwar.

Instantaneously, a chillness passed through Nagaraja Rao, as the picture shown to him was that of Sri Raghavendraswami.

‘Oh, what a blessing it is for Anwar to have had the darshan of Sri Raghavendra in person, although not knowing who he was,’ contemplated Nagaraja Rao, greatly excited at what had taken place in his house.

There is a hymn in Kannada that glorifies Sri Raghavendra with a description suggestive of his gracing devotees by his visits to their houses, be it at day time or at night. True to that, Sri Raghavendra has chosen to visit Nagaraja Rao’s house in this episode.

It is not necessary that one should be a devotee of the extreme type, to be blessed with his darshan. Sri Raghavendra has in fact graced even commoners by giving darshan in person or in their dreams, which is happening often, even now.

Anwar has seen Sri Raghavendra in person. Also, he has heard the resonance of the puja bell, though he has not seen the puja performed by Sri Gururaja.

Akin to this incident, in another one, a person has sensed such puja being performed by the saint, but while in Anwar's experience it was in reality, in this episode it happens in the dream of that person.

The person who had such a dream is known to me well. He is one Raula Hanumantha Rao, popularly called as R.H. Rao. He has drawn pictures for some of my publications and is adept at painting also, having executed some splendid ones for the Sri Mutt at Tiruvallikkeni, which are still in exhibition there and are well appreciated by those visiting the place.

Sri Venkataramana, Padmavathi Devi, Sri Vadhacharya, Sri Raghavendra's Prahlada and Jayasara avatar, besides portraits of Sri Rayaru have been painted by him and are on display at various places.

It was in 1985, when Rao was painting Sri Raghavendra's picture at the Sri Mutt, that he had a dream at night.

In that dream, Rao enters the Sri Mutt to give

electricity then and it was 3 P.M. The employees of Sri Mutt were asleep at that hour and only a couple of petromax lights were providing some glimmer inside.

In the calmness prevalent then at that place, Rao sees someone going inside and follows him instinctively. The person ahead of him circumambulates the Brindavana of Sri Raghavendra and later vanishes.

Rao advances further and gets near the Brindavana. There he hears the ringing of the puja bell and keeps his ears glued to the wall of the sanctum sanctorum.

The sound of cymbals clanging too were audible to Rao at that time, but all of a sudden he feels being thrown inside the Brindavana by some force as powerful as a high voltage electric shock.

He was rendered speechless and breathless. But his eyes were open and were looking around. Just then the manager of Sri Mutt comes there attired like Sri Raghavendra, with a garland of Tulsi beads around his neck and a holy vessel in his hand and Rao gets awakened then.

Rao then looks at the person, with eyes fixed at him. He exclaims, "Gururaja" in great excitement and joy. The dream dissipates then as Rao's sleep is disturbed and he gets up. He then visualises in his mind the image of Sri Gururaja that he had seen in his dream, and feels enthralled. And strangely, the feeling akin to an electric shock that he had experienced in his dream lingers in him, long after he had woken up.

When Rao told me this incident, it set me thinking

3 P.M., although the dream itself had occurred to him only during his sleep at night.

Does Sri Raghavendra perform puja at 3 P.M.? No, certainly not. It must only be 3 A.M., since the dimly lit surroundings, petromax lights and the mutt staff being asleep, are nothing unfamiliar in the wee hours, as also in the afternoons. Therefore, it would not be wrong to assume that the occurrences would have taken place at 3 A.M.

In this connection, it is my contention that whatever be the time when the incidents took place in the dream, it is only the purport of the dream that is of importance to us.

While Sri Raghavendra is gracing mankind in ever so many ways like this, some devotees feel aggrieved and angered that he is not extending his mercy to them or delays conferment of benefits to them, whereas others not having even an iota of faith in Divinity, get blessed immediately. Such feelings are often given vent to in their letters to me and as such I have been able to well understand the state of their minds.

Many have even expressed fears as to whether some flaws in their worship or lack of faith at times (arising in moments of depression), would cause them to suffer his malediction. Why, even a learned pundit had such an idea and we are going to know about his quaint experiences, in the next chapter.

In Part I, we have seen an incident under the caption, "Sacred rice changes colour." Sri Srinivasachar figuring there had also thought on the same lines, but later, he is

made to realize that Sri Raghavendra is an ocean of mercy.

I generally reply to such letters received from readers, at the earliest. And they too have written again later on, after experiencing the mysterious powers of Sri Raghavendra. On this note, we shall move on to the next chapter.

### **GURU RAGHAVENDRA, AN EMBODIMENT OF MERCY**

It was the time when Sri Suyamindra Thirtha was occupying the exalted seat of the pontificate of the Sri Mutt at Mantralaya. A learned person, owing allegiance to another mutt, had then come on a visit to Mantralaya. His individuality and genius won the appreciation of the pontiff and so he honoured him by the conferment of an award, without the prejudice that he belonged to a different following.

The visitor, after returning to his place, apprised the chief of his mutt exuberantly of the honour done to him by Sri Raghavendraswami Mutt, Mantralaya.

The head of that mutt was not however happy about it and told him bluntly how he could accept the award given to him by another mutt. The reprimanded person was therefore constrained to go back to Mantralaya and return the award to the Sri Mutt.

A few days later, the learned pundit was afflicted by paralysis and the stroke, as is usually the case, had caused restriction of his movements.

People around him started talking that the unexpected catastrophe must have been caused by Sri Raghavendra, on account of the misdemeanour of the vidwan in having returned the award to the Sri Mutt. Soon, 'the paralysis affected victim too felt convinced about it and decided that the matter should not be left like that, without a test.

And before long, he was in Mantralaya with an attendant's help and started pleading before Sri Raghavendra, pouring forth, 'Oh Gururaja, what offence have I committed? Is it wrong to have accepted the honour conferred on me at this holy place? Or, have I erred in returning the award, in deference to the feelings of my mutt head? When the award was given, I accepted it and when told to return it, I did the same.

It is therefore unfair on your part to punish me like this, leaving aside the others instrumental in it - the one who presented the award to me and the other who advised me to return it to the Sri Mutt. Oh, why then have you doomed me in this manner, for no fault of mine?'

On hearing his wailings Sri Suyamindra Thirtha comforted him and advised him calmly, 'Don't worry about this. You stay with me for a week, you will be alright soon.'

'How can it turn out to be alright, Swami? If there should be some blemish in my supplication and prayer to Sri Rayaru, I may again be condemned and it is beyond my capacity to bear another such sentencing,' cried the person, seeking solace from the pontiff.

‘Please don’t get perturbed. Be quiet and do as I tell you. Please remain here with me for a week,’ said the Swami and made him stay with him and have the prasada of Sri Raghavendra every day, in his company.

And after a week, the victim of paralysis was completely alright, much to his joy and surprise.

‘Swami, how has this been possible?’ asked the person excitedly and in a kind of happiness that knew no bounds.

‘It is only by the grace of Sri Raghavendra you are alright. Look, Sri Rayaru has never cursed anyone and in his life history such an incident can never be traced. On the contrary, he has protected the accursed ones from the evil effects of such malediction by others. Even in case of those suffering on account of their sins of an earlier birth, he has lent his helping hand to mitigate their pain and gradually nullify the ill-effects of their past deeds. He has brought you here only to cure you of your malady. It is he who has caused you to think that Rayaru should be challenged for making you suffer on account of what you perceived as his curse, ultimately bringing you to his place. Otherwise, you would not have come to Mantralaya, so soon. It is to extend his mercy on you and to make you alright that Sri Raghavendra has done this. It has been ordained as your fate that you should suffer this illness at this time of your life. But it is Sri Raghavendra who has made you think otherwise about the affliction and in the end cured you of it. Sri Rayaru is known for his magnanimity and infinite compassion and

...

uyamindra explained the significance of all that had appened.

The person cured of paralysis, then prostrated before the Swami and paid his obeisances to him. He so ran to the Brindavana of Sri Raghavendra, prayed ere to his heart's content and then left for his place, ale and healthy, with peace and happiness in his mind.

Sri Raghavendra is ever ready to grace us, like a amadhenu and Kalpavruksha and will never condemn y one.

When in distress, our thoughts may go astray and e may even vent out, 'Gururaja, are you really alive or it ust a myth?'

But, can we ever imagine that our sufferings could made to vanish then and there? Is such a thing ssible?

On the contrary, we should condition our mind to the ulty that only at the appropriate time one could reap e benefit and not instantaneously, by mere wishful nking.

We eat a mango and enjoy its sweetness. But has mango tree borne the fruit in just one day? In fact, e forefathers would have planted the tree and we, as ir progeny, are now enjoying the fruit of their efforts. ewise, by the good deeds and virtues of an earlier h, we now enjoy prosperity and happiness, achieving n with ease.

Some may reap the benefit after a long struggle, like one who plants a tree and waits till it bears fruit, to



relish the taste of it. That way, the ultimate success one attains after overcoming all the trials, is something that leaves one with a greater sense of delight than the mere contentment that one experiences under relatively less arduous conditions.

Whatever be the ordeals, one should develop the steadfast belief that Sri Raghavendra will always extend his helping hand, as even the mere chanting of his name will undoubtedly yield favourable results in the end.

Rituals like Sankalpa seva and observance of Vratas are intended only to orient our mind towards Divine worship. One need not be sceptical that even minor aberrations (resulting out of ignorance) will not be tolerated by Sri Raghavendra and that we would be made to suffer for any such deviation from normal adherence.

We have seen in Part I how the illiterate Venkanna mentally prays to Sri Raghavendra, chanting within himself “Om Sri Raghavendraya Namaha” and as a result the contents of a letter given to him for reading aloud, echo in his ears, by the mysterious power and grace of Sri Gururaja.

It is enough if even the words, “Poojyaya Raghavendraya Satya Dharma Rataya Cha, Bhajatam Kalpavrukshaya namatam Kamadhenave” are uttered a number of times, in worship of Sri Raghavendraswami, if one cannot do it for 1008 times in the sastraic way. It should never be thought that Sri Raghavendra has caused misery to us, only because of our non-adherence to the prescribed manner of adoration.

In the same way, it is improper to think, 'I have always believed Sri Raghavendra resolutely, but he has not fulfilled my desire.'

If one's faith in Sri Raghavendra is unshakeable, such thought arising in one's mind, is out of question. A steadfast mind will never give rise to any suspicions and one should therefore leave the burden of one's problems to Sri Raghavendra, with the confidence that he has been entrusted with the responsibility of solving them. He is a person who will certainly extend his mercy on his devotees, at the appropriate time.

Some may entertain a wrong notion that Sri Raghavendra is quick in gracing those who are non-believers and that the devout ones are blessed with what they have prayed for, only after facing many trials and that too belatedly. But this is far from the truth, which could be explained by means of story.

There are four people walking together in hot midday sun. The heat is beyond endurance and they feel extremely thirsty, their throats getting parched. There are no houses or sources of water nearby. But on seeing a traveller at a distance and becoming aware that he is carrying some quantity of water with him, they start running towards him.

One of them says, 'Why should we run to him? Is he going to give us water?'

'We shall ask him and if he gives, it is well and good,' says another person.

'If we are destined to have water, we will somehow get it, even if he does not spare the water he is carrying,' says the third one.

As they were travelling thus and advancing towards the stranger, one of them suddenly swoons and collapses on the floor. In a jiffy, the traveller who had water with him, splashes it forcefully on the face of the person who has fainted. And when the victim slowly opens his eyes, the stranger gives him some water to drink.

The person who had lost his consciousness was the one, who in a dispirited way had commented, 'Is he going to give us water?' But strangely he is given water on a priority basis and extended first aid assistance too, before the others could have their thirst quenched.

No doubt all the four persons were thirsty, but if it is questioned why the one who had been rendered unconscious was given preferential treatment, it would be improper and outrageous. And one may not also be so heartless.

In the same way, Sri Raghavendra will grace not only those having faith in him, but also the non-believers.

The rationale behind the Swami extending his grace first to the non-believer, is that such a person is much in the same position as the one who had suffered the blackout. Yes, a person who is under a illusion and unaware of the realities around him, has to be awakened first and helped out.

Sri Raghavendra graces everyone without any prejudice, removing the miseries of those approaching him with their problems. As such, one should not measure him or his mysterious powers by the delay in extending his mercy to a devotee.

In another episode, a young woman of unsound mind is brought to Mantralaya, for seva. One night she runs away towards the Tungabhadra river and when she is dashing behind a bush, the shrubs there catch fire! What the people around her think about the matter and how they are awestruck at the mysterious influence of Sri Raghavendra, would be most thrilling and they find narration in the pages that follow.

### **AN EVIL REMOVED BY FIRE**

Even as we are in the embryonic stage of development, our longevity is predetermined by the Almighty. But it is only after the death of an individual we calculate and tell that he has lived a specific number of years. During the life time of a person, one is not able to know how long he would live. And that is really the Divine mystery behind it!

In this age of scientific progress, many discoveries are made and research is done on ever so many aspects of human life, but are we in a position to determine the longevity of a person?

The computer technology has revolutionized our life so much that from the photograph of a child we can project by computer graphics his bodily growth and facial changes at various stages of his development, till old age. But, can the computer indicate the date when his death would take place?

Oh, Lord! How mysterious are your ways! Can one imagine how the world would be, if the longevity of an

The bride's father, in such an event, would tell the prospective groom, 'Your longevity is only 35 and how can you expect my daughter being given in wedlock to you?' So also, there would be problems galore, for those seeking life insurance coverage. And employers would start questioning those seeking jobs, as to how they could hope to get appointed, with the kind of poor life span they are blessed with.

By the same token, if a person should be knowing in advance that he would live for a hundred years, he may be led to act in a unbridled manner, with an arrogance that nobody can do anything to him. And many other unnatural happenings like these, could take place.

Oh, how bizarre are the deeds of the Almighty, who has kept the length of life of an individual, inscrutable!

It follows as a necessary corollary to this that if an individual (whose life is predetermined by the Unseen force) dies unexpectedly in an accident, or by suicide or any other unnatural way, what happens then? And what is the proof that one passes through the whole length of one's life, as determined by the Almighty?

Such an early and unnatural death is referred to in common parlance, as "Alpa Ayush" or shortened life.

If death should occur before the period earmarked by God, it is only the body that will be destroyed. The soul of the individual will however be wandering around the place, till the ordained span of life is over.

An example that could be cited in support of this, is the case of Saraswathi Bai, who, on hearing that her

husband Venkatanatha had taken to sainthood, ended her life by jumping in a well and was later tormenting the saintly person, as a ghostly spirit hovering around him. Her soul, ultimately, attains liberation by the grace of Sri Raghavendra. (This has been narrated in a detailed manner in Part I and Venkatanatha was none else than Sri Raghavendraswami of his presanyasa days).

When death occurs in an unnatural way, the soul either wanders as a ghost or gets into the body of someone it likes. In this manner, a ghost had entered the body of a woman and she was brought to Mantralaya in the hope that a darshan of Sri Raghavendra could bring about the necessary change in her and cure her of mental derangement.

We have seen in Part I how the mrithika of Sri Raghavendraswami had frightened a ghost and by its power the soul that was wandering as a ghost had been redeemed. In the same way, we are to see here how the woman possessed by an evil spirit is freed from the shackles of that sinful influence, by the grace of Sri Raghavendra.

In the two earlier incidents, Sri Raghavendra liberates the souls that were wandering as ghosts, but in this episode, a spirit has entered into the body of a woman and is haunting her.

One night, the woman possessed by the evil spirit, suddenly started darting towards the Tungabhadra river. Those around her went chasing after her, but could not however keep pace with her. They kept on running at a distance, to prevent anything untoward happening to her.

It appeared to them at a certain point that she was running behind a cluster of bushes and lo, in an instant the shrubbery was on fire and soon it was blazing and spreading fast. The woman too gave out an unnatural shriek at that time, that was awful and frightening.

After some time, the fire subsided and those who were running after her, went near the place where the bush had been flaming. They were in panic, even to inch their way to the spot.

Those who had brought the woman to Mantralaya, wailed, 'Oh Raghavendra, we were at least able to see her all these days, even if she was under the influence of some evil spirit. We came to you with the fond hope that she could, by your grace, be cured of her mental aberration. But, is this what is in store for her? Instead of getting rid of the evil spirit possessing her, you seem to have taken away her life itself. Is this not unjust? How can we now get back to our place? What can we tell the people there, who would ask about her? When so many came to us claiming that they have extraordinary powers to get rid of the evil spirit dwelling in her, we did not believe them and have instead approached you with utmost faith in your powers. We are now left in the position of having to take home her ashes only.' With uncontrollable grief, they then hastened their steps towards the spot where they had seen the woman last and there a surprise was awaiting them!

Yes, the woman was lying there on a rock near the thicket that had caught fire. And those searching for her saw her from a distance and felt relieved that she was alive and had not been consumed by the fire. They soon

fetched some water and sprinkled it on her face. Ere long, she regained her consciousness and astonishingly looked at others like a normal person - there appeared no gruesomeness in her face that had amazingly turned into one reflective of warmth and geniality.

Slowly, they brought her in that state to the place of their stay, and asked of her what all had taken place.

‘Yes, I remember having run fast, unmindful of even the stones and thorns that caused abrasions and pricks all over my tender feet. I can even recall that I involuntarily cried out "Raghavendra, Om Sri Raghavendra....." And when I was near the hedge, I could realize something leaving my body and getting into the bush and setting it ablaze. Just at that moment, some mysterious force pushed me aside from where the fire was raging. After that, I am conscious only now and am aware at this moment that this is not an illusory situation. I was not conscious of any pain at that time but am now experiencing it in the feet and all over the body,’ said the woman, to the astonishment and awe of everyone around.

Her relatives, on hearing these, vented aloud, ‘Appa Guru Raghavendra! Without knowing about your mysterious powers and your greatness, we have spoken disparagingly about you. We have thought ill of you, not knowing about your divine potency that has caused the evil spirit leave her body. Not only that, you have, through your grace, brought her back to her normal state. In ignorance, we have thought otherwise about you’. Needless to describe their state of mind then, as the tears blinding their eyes vouched the depth of their penitence.



This incident took place around 1950 and appeared in the "Madhwa mitran" publication. The editor of that journal was also present there, when it had occurred. A retired Presidency magistrate by name Sri S.N.V. Rajachar, was also a witness to those happenings and was left in tears of joy, on realizing about the powerful influence of Sri Gururaja.

In this episode, the woman who was alright mentally, is suddenly possessed by an evil spirit that is later driven out of her body by the mysterious power and grace of Sri Raghavendra. In almost a similar way, a person who was normal, loses his power of speech, arising out of a strange incident. Later, he visits Mantralaya and does seva to Sri Raghavendra.

He could not bear the agony even for ten days and devoutly prays to Gururaja, 'Please grace me forthwith, or else, I shall be putting an end to my life.' And what happens to him is contained in the next chapter.

### **OCCULTIST CREATES DUMBNESS, SRI RAGHAVENDRA CURES IT.**

Channapatna is a town on the Mysore Road, at a distance of 40 kms from Bangalore.

Near Channapatna is a village by name Sankalakere, famous for the making of dolls.

One Rama Sastry, an orthodox Brahmin, was living with his uncle at Sankalakere. The uncle was a Karnam (village accountant), by profession.

Rama-Sastry was well versed in the Vedās and strict adherence to the orthodox customs. He will not take even a cup of water at a place where he found any deviation from orthodoxy.

Ummidi is another village in the same area, near Mandya. There was a person worshipping Lord Dattatreya in that place. He had established an ashram there and was given to strict observance of religious practices of devotion, like fasting and mouna vrata (a vow not to communicate verbally).

The Dattatreya upasaka had also acquired occult powers and was using them to allure people into his fold. His ashram would always be swarming with masses coming there from even far away places, to see him performing pujas.

Once, Rama Sastry also went to Ummidi and participated in the puja performed by the Dattatreya upasaka. Though overawed by the crowd of people thronging at the ashram, he was unhappy about the non-observance of even the normal orthodox practices there.

The puja took place in the evening and after its completion the Dattatreya upasaka himself distributed prasada, to all those who had congregated there.

But Rama Sastry abstained from consuming anything and when invited to take food in the ashram, he refused resolutely, 'I have just taken my food in the afternoon and I should not be eating anything now, as it is against orthodox custom to have victuals again', which made

That night, the sorcerer called Rama Sastry aside and with a morsel of food in his hand he chanted some mantras. He then extended his hand to Rama Sastry and the latter, like one bound under a magical spell, received it in his hand and consumed it at once.

While Sastry was unflinching in his stand in the evening, at night he took the thing offered to him, without any demur. He then returned to his place the same night.

Next morning, when Sastry got up and was engaged in his routine chores, he realized that something was abnormal with him.

Yes, it was then that he became aware that he had lost the power of his vocal cords. He tried to utter some words, but alas, they would not come out of his mouth. He could not speak to anyone from then onwards.

His uncle and others however thought differently about it and were led to believe that after his visit to the occultist, Rama Sastry was also observing mouna vrata. They were, as such, unaware of the disability that had developed in him.

It was only after three or four months that people started realizing that Rama Sastry had been afflicted by some strange malady that had deprived him of the faculty of speech. Rama Sastry too confirmed through gestures at that time that their inference was correct.

Although belated, his uncle, at that point of time, thought it fit to consult a physician and therefore one Dr. Yogananda, an eminent medical practitioner, was called and requested to examine Rama Sastry thoroughly. After a complete check-up, the doctor opined

that the patient had nothing wrong in his system, leaving everyone in doubt and perplexity.

Later, he himself declared that the patient's malady cannot be cured by medicine and therapy and suggested his being taken to Mantralaya for invoking divine intervention.

Rama Sastry did not, however, go there for nearly a year, and so the doctor had to reiterate again that Mantralaya was the last resort for him, where such ailments of unknown origin get cured by the grace of Sri Raghavendra.

At last, as days passed, without there being any progress in his health, Rama Sastry came around to the view that he should go to the holy place, to earn the blessings of the saint. Soon, he was there and on 13-7-1950 he took the vow for Sankalpa seva and started doing it at once.

The first day's seva was over and Rama Sastry had on that day prayed with great devotion, 'Gururaja, please restore in me the faculty of speech that I have lost since long. It is my earnest longing that you should give darshan to me or at least appear in my dream.'

That night, Rama Sastry did not, however, have the guru's darshan in his dream. The next day, he was fatigued and dispirited, but still continued the seva.

'Oh Raghavendra! How meticulously have I observed the sastras and lived an orthodox way of life. I have always held my head high, on account of such perfection in my life. Oh, why then have I become like this why am I being subjected to this torment? I have come

to you with the fond hope that I should soon be alright by your benign grace. But you also seem to be silent like me. Oh, what is the meaning of this? As doctors could not cure my malady, it was suggested that I should come to you and if you are not going to extend to me your compassion, where else can I go? At least today, please grace me by giving darshan in my dream,' he submitted to Sri Rayaru, the prayer emanating from the innermost recesses of his heart.

The distinguishing characteristic of Vedas is that they should be rendered with suitable modulations of voice, in decibels of high and low pitches, appropriate to the pattern of the musical notes adopted. The words should be uttered with clarity, with all the tonal variations. Rama Sastry, who was brilliant in this, was now a hors de combat and could not bear the physical disability that he was suffering from. He weeps in front of the Brindavana, but Sri Rayaru does not appear in his dream, even the next day.

It was 23-7-1950, ten days after Rama Sastry had arrived at Mantralaya.

'Appa, Prabho! Are you deaf to my cries or is it that I don't deserve your mercy? If I should be unworthy of your grace, please let me know that at least. As one who has learnt the Vedas, what is the use of my earthly life, without being able to communicate verbally to others the knowledge that I have acquired, that too when I am not endowed with your benevolent grace. In fact, those seeing my plight, will not be inclined to learn Vedas and therefore, I am finally making this submission to you. I desire that you should come in my dream tonight, failing

which I would be constrained to put an end to my life tomorrow itself, by drowning myself in the Tungabhadra river. This is definite,' rued Rama Sastry in utter dejection, standing before the Brindavana and witnessing the puja that was in progress there.

At that time, Sri Rajagopalacharya, the Chief Executive of the Sri Mutt, and certain other important persons were in the proximity of the Brindavana. He was the father of the present pontiff Sri Sushmindra Thirtha, in his pre-sanyasa days.

After Puja and Naivedya, there was Mahamangalarathi, as usual. Just then, a voice yelling, 'Gururaja, Gururaja, Gururaja....', uttered in great excitement, was heard by all those present there.

It is normal for the gathering to raise devout cries on Gururaja during the Mahamangalarathi every day. But the loud voice heard that day was something unusual and it seemed to come not only from the mouth of the person yelling it, but also from the bottom of his heart.

Yes, it was the voice of Rama Sastry that was resounding there, above all others. And there was every reason for it to be heard aloud and incessantly, because it was the ecstatic cry of a person who had been dumb for two years and was on the verge of putting an end to his life the next day, at the height of his despondency.

Those at the Sri Mutt were astounded at the unexpected thing they witnessed and when they asked Rama Sastry about the reason for his excitement and elation, what he related to them was yet another mysterious thing that had taken place before him at that

Rama Sastry recounted to them everything that had happened to him till his visit to Mantralaya and his prayer to Sri Raghavendra during the seva that he had been performing.

He then continued, 'I had made a firm determination to sacrifice my life. Losing the faculty of speech was the first misfortune that struck me and non-appearance of Sri Gururaja in my dream, despite my earnest prayers to him with utmost devotion, was yet another blow that could not be borne by me at all.

It was in such a state of depressed mind that I prayed to him today with deep devotion at heart and then what a sight I beheld at the time of Mahamangalarathi! Ah, I could see Gururaja there right before my eyes, in full splendour. While those around me could see only the Brindavana, I was fortunate enough to have the vision of Raghavendra in the Brindavana in front of me. It was my expectation that he would grace me by giving me a vision of his shan in my dream, but he has made his appearance before me in person and gladdened me beyond words. How can I narrate that scene - it is truly indescribable!

Gururaja was sitting on an exquisitely designed throne embedded with gems and precious stones. His right leg was placed on the left lap and the left leg was hanging from the seat. He was wearing ear-rings adorned with diamonds and a garland of Tulsi beads was around his neck. On his head was a spectacular crown, adorned with precious stones. Sri Gururaja was looking young and luminous in golden colour and was glowing with a brightness that was unique in its splendour. And on seeing him, I have involuntarily cried

out, "Gururaja, Gururaja....". The whole thing was over in a couple of minutes. I can never forget this wonderful experience that remains etched in my memory.

The Dattatreya upasaka had caused dumbness in me and I was always pensive of what had happened to me. But today, I feel grateful to him, for I could not have had the good fortune of having Sri Raghavendra's darshan, but for what that occultist had done to me.'

When Rama Sastry ended his long narration, those belonging to the Sri Mutt were awe-struck. Sastry, well-versed in the Vedas, suffered untold hardship by the unexpected turn of events in his life, but the darshan that Sri Raghavendra gave him, left him cherishing it in his memory, every moment of his life.

Rama Sastry was unmatched in excellence in the chanting of Vedas, in a ringing voice that would lure everyone. For a short period in his life he suffers dumbness, but ultimately he pleads with Sri Raghavendra and swearing before him that he would be putting an end to his miserable life, wins the grace of Sri Raghavendra and gets back his faculty of speech.

In the next chapter, an even more harrowing experience of a child is covered, which episode will melt even the stone-hearted.

The child figuring there is deaf and dumb at birth and the agony of its parents attracts the mercy of Sri Raghavendra. How the child is graced by Sri Gururaja is something that will leave an indelible impression in us for ever.



## **SRI RAGHAVENDRA GRACES A DUMB CHILD**

It was the year 1972.

One V.Soundararajan was working as an Assistant in the Indian Bank at Hosur. He was of pious disposition, though not a follower of Sri Raghavendraswami.

His younger son Narayanan was four years old at that time.

Child Narayanan was phlegmy from the time of his birth and would always be suffering from blocked nose and throat, accompanied by severe bouts of coughing.

The parents took him to several doctors and specialists for treatment of the malady, but the child continued to suffer the ailment, till he was well past two years of age. Still worse, the child was also deaf, totally devoid of hearing ability.

Children born deaf turn out to be dumb also, as they cannot hear the words spoken by others, to be able to grasp them and practise uttering them. Narayanan was no exception to this and was only competent to produce some odd sounds through his vocal cords. He was unable to comprehend even the word "Amma", to correlate it with his mother and utter it. The parents, as such, were always in grief about the abnormality of the child.

While so, they moved as tenants into the house of an old Madhwa lady there. The land lady, seeing the plight of the parents, gave them a picture depicting Sri

Raghavendra with a Veena and advised them to revere the saintly person every Thursday with a garland of flowers and the lighting of lamps, as is customary in Divine worship.

Sri Soundararajan was not inclined to do what had been suggested to him, distraught as he was at not having been able to get his son cured either by the doctors or by invoking Divine mercy.

But his wife started worshipping Sri Raghavendra every Thursday, as advised by the old lady.

After three weeks, Sri Soundararajan (who was not adoring Sri Raghavendra), has a dream in which he sees Sri Raghavendraswami appearing with a benign and compassionate look. Sri Raghavendra is doing puja to Lord Chennakesava, with Tulsi leaves, in the prayer room of their house, chanting "Vishnu Sahasranama." Sri Soundararajan (though in dream), hears the recitation of the 1008 names of Vishnu by Sri Raghavendra, in a resounding voice-a rare blessing indeed!

The puja was being witnessed by his wife and child, along with him.

After the arathi was over, Sri Raghavendra calls him and Soundararajan stands near the saint most respectfully. Then Sri Raghavendra takes the child on his lap and makes him swallow a small quantity of the divine prasad (a sweet item). He lifts the child and makes him stand and then gesticulates that the child will be able to speak. As soon as Sri Rayaru blesses in this manner, the dream is over and Sri Soundararajan wakes up in great perplexity.

And when Sri Soundararajan sees the clock, it is 5.1. Thereafter, his mind is continuously engrossed in thoughts about the strange dream.

Later, he meets the old Madhwa lady and prostrates before her and relates everything, most emotionally.

The lady blesses him and tells, 'Please make a trip to Srirangalaya with your family, since Sri Raghavendra Swami has extended his grace to you in your dream.'

And as advised by the lady, Sri Soundararajan goes to the holy place, on an auspicious day.

On the first day there, all of them had their bath in the Srirangabhadra river in the morning and the child was also in the bath and made to do pradakshana and bhajana of the Brindavana, along with the parents, in the morning to Sri Raghavendra.

Sri Soundararajan, who did the circumambulation in the morning and afternoon, left it at that and did not continue it in the evening.

He started feeling a sense of dejection that although he had experienced something in the dream, it was unlikely that it would come true. And that was the reason he was not going around the Brindavana in the evening.

The child's mother, however, took the child with her, to worship.

At about 6 P.M., when Sri Soundararajan was sitting in the room in a depressed state of mind, his wife came in hurriedly, holding the child in one hand and something concealed in the other. Mr. Soundararajan

was somewhat bewildered at the urgency exhibited by his wife at that time.

‘Please have this.’

‘What is it please?’

‘This is the thirtha, the sanctified water. Please have it soon,’ said the wife and gave it to her husband.

Sri Soundararajan gulped it at once and looked at his wife, trying to find out the reason for her excitement. His wife too was trying to tell something and it was then that Sri Soundararajan could not believe his own ears.

Yes, from a close quarters he heard a child calling, ‘Appa.....’, which caused in him a chillness passing through his body.

The child’s voice repeatedly uttered the words, ‘Appa, Appa.....’ and Sri Soundararajan could only then realize that it was his own son calling him. In great excitement and awe, Sri Soundararajan lifted the child and cried, ‘Narayana, Narayana, my darling’, kissing him most affectionately and shedding tears of joy.

The child had been born deaf and dumb, not knowing the terms, ‘Appa’ and ‘Amma’ and when it uttered them astonishingly, the father was simply taken aback and overjoyed.

‘Oh, what a surprise and how unimaginable is this! How has our child voiced these words, dumb as it has been all these years? How has this transformation taken place?’

‘Yes, I will tell’, replied the wife and started narrating what all had taken place.

‘As I was going around the Brindavana with the child, during the ninth circumambulation, I found an old man with saffron robes standing near the entrance to the Brindavana with a Kamandala (holy vessel) in his hand. There was a divine radiance emanating from his body.’

‘What happened next, please tell.’

‘He called me near him. Not only that, he asked me, “Amma! Your son has to get the ability to speak and for that only you are doing the Sankalpa seva, is it not?”’

‘I said, “Yes, Swami!”’

‘Did our child get his speech immediately?’

‘No. He gave some holy water from his vessel and asked me to give it to the child thrice. Later, he asked me also to take the thirtha and to give you too a little quantity of it. And that is what I have brought for you!’

‘You did not tell me when our son spoke.’

‘Immediately after he gulped the thirtha, he looked at me and said, “Amma.” I really cannot describe the joy, I felt then. Further, besides calling me, “Amma”, he addressed the venerable old man as “Thatha” (grandfather). And after extending our obeisance to him, we have come to you at once.’

‘Alright, lock the room please. We shall hasten there to see him. I saw a strange scene in my dream and you have seen something in reality, the child also sharing that experience. Appa, Guru Raghavendra.....,’ said the father

and ran towards the Brindavana, with both his wife and son following him.

But the venerable old man could not be found there even after searching all around the Brindavana. Yes, undoubtedly, he will not be there, as he had accomplished the purpose for which he had made his appearance. The devotees around the prakara asked them whom they were looking for and when they were told what all had happened, they started telling the lady, 'Ah, you took thirtha some time back. Was it Rayaru who gave you that? Oh, we did not know it then,' prostrating before her in great reverence.

After this bizarre occurrence, Narayana became hale and healthy and started talking gradually, though with pauses and stammers, as is usually the case when any child is in the process of learning articulation.

Narayanan is now 31 and has passed typewriting examinations, with ease. He is now employed in a factory in Dharmapuri.

Sri Soundararajan, after this incident, got a promotion and was posted to Tirupati. He was residing in the Rama Temple Street, in the house of an Archaka of the Tirumala temple - undoubtedly, yet another divine grace, as he was blessed to have the prasad of Lord Venkataramana, every day.

This occurrence is yet another testimony to the fact that Sri Raghavendra, even today, is giving darshan to his devotees from his Brindavana.

In part I, we have already seen exhaustively how

occasions, had the grace of Sri Raghavendra's darshan, in the Brindavana prakara.

Yes, it is undoubtedly, the benign grace of Sri Rayaru that has helped me to get a footing in my profession and rise up to the position that I am now occupying in my field. Oh, how many hurdles I have faced in the interim! For that matter, even for the writing and publishing of this work, the impediments in my path were far too many, but ultimately, I have come to know later that Sri Gururaja has willed it to happen that way, for some valid reason that was not apparent to me then. And when I had this belated realization, I have reflected within myself, 'Oh, is it for this that Gururaja has done it so?'

Such enlightenment is only short-lived, as the mind again goes back to a disturbed state, when there is yet another problem or distress.

I then find solace and peace in raising the cry, 'Appa Gururaja!'

I have even thought hypothetically whether such solace and peace should not have preceded the agony! But, all the same, I find it agreeable to be in discomfort, so that I can be constantly thinking of Sri Gururaja. It is a different world altogether, to be always praying to the Guru with devotion from the depth of one's heart-some times getting angered on account of disappointments and at other times being joyous and engrossed in thoughts about his mysterious power and relishing that experience.

Some devotees may feel that instead of Sri Raghavendra helping them after the distress, why he

should not be protecting them before the misery. The reason for this will be seen in the next chapter.

We are also to see there how Sri Raghavendra who removes sorrows, rescues two of his devotees, when they are in a tight spot.

**SRI GURURAJA RENDERS  
TIMELY HELP**

There was an auditor in Hubli, by name Aparanji. He was an ardent devotee of Sri Raghavendra.

One day he left for his office telling his people, 'I shall be back for lunch and let it be kept ready, as I may have to go out again.'

He was habituated to worshipping Sri Gururaja, before leaving for his office. He followed the practice on that day aslo.

And after finishing his work for the day, he was returning home on his motor cycle, with Rs.4,000/- on his person.

In a bend on the way, he meets with an accident and is thrown off his vehicle, as a result of brake failure and consequent skidding of the bike. His lips utter, "Gururaja" as he somersaults on the road, the motor cycle too rolling a little away from him.

Aparanji could not even get up at that time. The packet of Rs.4,000/- kept with him falls aside and soon Aparanji loses his consciousness.

A little later, the telephone at his residence jingles and when the inmates of the house receive the call, they



get shocked at the message conveyed to them. And as directed by the informant, they rush to the Patil Nursing Home. There, they find Aparanji in bandages and ask of him how he had met with the accident.

Aparanji says he only remembers his having been thrown off the vehicle and is not aware how he happened to be in the nursing home.

And when enquiries are made at the Reception Counter as to how Aparanji came to be admitted in the nursing home, there is a baffling revelation about it.

Yes, it comes to be known that the person who had brought the accident victim there, had also handed over the key of the motor cycle and cash of Rs. 4,000/- at the counter and that the telephone call to Aparanji's house had not been put through by anyone from the Nursing Home and presumably the Good Samaritan who brought him there should only have done it.

'If you have not telephoned, then who else could have done it?'

'When we saw the visiting card in the pocket of Mr. Aparanji and were about to telephone to your number, we were surprised to see you rushing to us with great anxiety and enquiring about him,' said those at the Reception desk.

'How did the person look like? Can you recollect what he said?'

'No, we are not in a position to visualize his features mentally. He said that the injured person had fallen off his vehicle and had become unconscious. He also handed

over to us the key of the motor bike and the cash the rider was carrying with him.'

'Did you not ask him who he was?'

'We asked him, but he said, "First you admit him and render what all medical assistance he requires immediately. His people will be here shortly and I will also be staying till then." So we kept quiet and did not ask him anything further.'

'Please see whether that person is somewhere around here.'

The staff members then went around the premises and not finding him anywhere, reported that he was not available in the nursing home. The matter was thereafter left at that.

A few days after, Aparanji recovered fully and was back home. It was a mystery to him as to who had rendered him timely help, when he had fainted on the road after sustaining injuries in the accident.

.. Later, Aparanji was always thoughtful whether he would be able to meet that Good Samaritan again. 'Gururaja, you have only sent somebody to save my life and surely this is not a human action,' he would often reflect, from within his heart.

Be that so, we shall now scan through another mysterious happening that took place in the year 1990.

It was the first week of November that year and Chennai was the target of battering by heavy rains that were lashing the city incessantly for three days.

Normal life was at a standstill in the metropolis, as there was no respite from the downpour that was continuous. Trees and hoardings by the side of roads, were being uprooted and mangled by the fury of the mosoon.

Behind the Sri Mutt at Tiruvallikkeni, there are some tenements for the staff of the mutt. They extend right upto Singarachari Street on the other side.

In the upstairs of one of those tenements, two students would always be busy with their studies for the C.A. examination. They were burning the mindnight oil and studying well beyond that time, on most occasions. The monsoonish weather was of no concern to them that day and they were all concentration on their preparation for the examination.

That night they were reading till 2 A.M. and would have continued even beyond, had not there been a power failure at that hour. As such, they retired to bed when there was sudden darkness all around.

By 3 A.M., rain had abated somewhat. And then, suddenly there was a deafening noise at that hour, that was heard even louder in the deathly silence prevalent then, as everyone was fast asleep in the wee hours.

A portion of the tenement, where the staff of the Sri Mutt were residing, had collapsed to rubbles, causing a loud bang.

The students who were studying for C.A. had also come down to the earth in a flash, with all the debris and building materials like wooden rafters and steel girders.

The manager of the Sri Mutt and the others, on hearing the noise, got up in panic and ran towards the wreckage, with torches in their hands.

In the dim light of the electric torches, they could sight there a neck jutting out of the shattered building materials. The entire body of the person, whose neck alone was visible, was found entangled in the mass around him and blood was trickling out of his head that had been badly bruised. There was however no trace of the other person and failure to locate him caused great anxiety to everyone present there.

Mohan Beta, the student whose neck was seen in the rubbles, was pulled out hurriedly and made to lie down at a place of safety.

Not finding the other youngster, those who had assembled there cried aloud, 'Ragu, Ragu, where are you Raghothama?', with deep agony at heart and a kind of fear that cannot be described in words.

They all started thinking that Ragu's end was over and his remains cannot immediately be located in such a mess of the tangled remains of the building.

'Gururaja, what an ordeal is this? There is no current also at this hour. Oh, Ragu, Ragu..!', they cry out in uncontrollable grief. And suddenly, as if in answer to their prayers, they hear a feeble moaning from somewhere.

The crowd of people then became silent, to be able to hear the moaning and track down its origin. At last, they could identify the place and there the person they were

debris. Slowly, they removed the fragmented pieces, one by one and pulled out Raghothaman also, like the other victim. He was found badly injured all over the body and blood was gushing out of a gaping wound in the head.

At once, both the injured students were lifted and taken to the mutt premises.

There, the manager anxiously searches for the telephone number of the ambulance service, but does not get it immediately. He then contacts the Ice House police station and requests the official on duty to arrange for an ambulance. And before he puts down the receiver of the telephone, an ambulance comes there from nowhere and stops outside!

‘Gururaja, what a wonder is this!’ they all exclaim and then rush the two youngsters to the Royapettah Hospital.

As soon as the ambulance reaches the hospital, power supply is restored, but it starts raining again.

The victims, whose injuries were causing anxiety, get immediate attention and treatment, thanks to their timely admission in the hospital. After some days, they become completely alright and return home.

Both of them complete their C.A. course later and presently one of them is an auditor, while the other is employed in a good service.

Ragu (or Raghothaman) figuring in this episode, is the son of one Satyanarayana Rao, who had been serving the Sri Mutt, since long.

The other youngster, Mohan Beta, is the nephew of the auditor, Aparanji, about whom we have already known at the beginning of this chapter.

If these two occurrences are compared, there was an accident in the incident involving Aparanji and in the second episode too something unforeseen takes place. It is not known who had admitted Aparanji in the nursing home and telephoned to his family later. Likewise, in the other event also, the ambulance van turns up, even as the manager of the Sri Mutt was trying to contact the emergency service.

And when the ambulance staff were asked how they came there, they inform that someone had telephoned to them a little while earlier and so had come there. Strangely, the time of the call as told by them and the time of the building collapse were almost identical!

Aparanji, Raghothaman and Mohan Beta - all three were steadfast devotees of Sri Raghavendra. Therefore, one would be led to think why they should have been made to suffer anguish and then helped out of the adversity and also whether they could not have been protected without their having to face those ordeals.

True to what the Lord has propounded in Gita, we have to necessarily taste the fruit of our good and bad deeds of earlier births, but by being devout and

beneficial results even in the midst of sufferings - timely succour forthcoming even in such dire circumstances.

And such help will be extended by Sri Raghavendra himself, from wherever he is, or even through others. That he graces his devotees either in person or in their dreams by extending his protection to them, has already been seen in several episodes cited thus far. And in the next three chapters, he reveals his supernatural powers in different ways and everyone of those incidents is concerning eye/eyesight, of different individuals.

### **GURU WILL ALWAYS PROTECT US**

One Venkannachar was living at a place called Mudigiri. He was popularly known as Mudigiri Venkannachar and the place was known also as Mundrigi.

Once Venkannachar committed a great blunder - that of observing the sun with naked eyes, during a solar eclipse. The disastrous result of it was a total loss of vision for Venkannachar, leaving him dismayed and ever regretful of his folly.

Specialists in ophthalmology pleaded their helplessness and told him that the condition of his eyes was beyond repair. Apart from the loss of sight, Venkannachar could not also go for work and had to be within the confines of his house.

He was left with no other alternative but to conclude that being in employment was just out of question thenceforth. He was often rueing that a single indiscreet

In the midst of such sorrowful existence, he once happened to go to Sholapur, where he met a friend of his and shared his agony with him. The friend was deeply moved by the predicament of Venkannachar and appealed to him to try the course of action he would be proposing.

Venkannachar poured out, 'What is the use of seeing more specialists and subjecting myself to tests again and again. They will only be taunting me with their remarks about the stupidity of my action!'

'You need not have to go to doctors, but I am suggesting one who is above all of them,' said the friend in a comforting tone.

'I say, where do you want me to go to?'

'I would advise you to go to Mantralaya and pray to Guru Raghavendra, performing seva to him. You will definitely find a change for the better.'

'It is established beyond doubt that Venkannachar cannot get back his eyesight. Why then are you giving him false hopes?' said another person who was there.

'It is not that. Gururaja's bountiful mercy cannot be gauged by anyone. He has saved even persons almost given up as dead. Let Venkannachar go to Mantralaya and do seva, as nothing is going to be lost in that.'

'I did not mean it that way. Knowing that something is beyond fulfilment, praying for such mercy and performing seva with that objective in mind, can even cause a negative impact, in that the affected person may, apart from being blind, lose also his faith and be weaned away



At that juncture, Venkannachar intervened in the conversation and said, 'I shall follow the advice of going to Mantralaya and be there soon with an escort. I suffered loss of sight most unexpectedly, and if by Divine grace it should also be restored in a similar way, let it happen so. And even if it turns out to be otherwise, I would not bother about it.'

Later, Venkannachar journeyed to Mantralaya with an attendant and there he started his seva in the prescribed manner, with utmost devotion. He prayed to Gururaja from within his heart and did pradakshana and namaskara with the help of his escort. He also rubbed the outside of his eyes with the holy mrithika of Sri Rayaru and did the seva that he had vowed to perform.

Those who saw Venkannachar doing seva with great devotion and involvement, despite visual impairment, felt agony in their hearts, looking at the pitiable condition he was in.

He was doing his devotional service in a befitting manner, chanting the stotra, 'Poojyaya Raghavendraya Satya Dharma Rataya Cha, Bhajatam Kalpavrukshaya Namatam Kamadhenave'. But quite unexpectedly, it soon became necessary for him to get back to his place, due to certain compelling circumstances. And left with no alternative, he returned to his place, reluctantly though.

He had to submit a medical report to his employers and his visit to Mantralaya had in no way mitigated his mental depression. Besides, the abrupt termination of his seva and return to his place had only aggravated his sorrow.

A certificate of fitness was a must to rejoin duty and continue in service. If it had been some other ailment, suitable medical certificate could have been given in anticipation of quick recovery, but being one pertaining to the eyesight, there was no possibility of obtaining any certificate distorting the real state.

Venkannachar therefore went to see the eye doctor, with his fingers crossed. He was waiting in the queue, engrossed in the reflection that he had to be there for nothing, as restoration of his sight was rather bleak and unimaginable.

When his turn came, the doctor called him inside and he moved to the doctor's chamber with the help of his attendant.

There, he was asked by the doctor to read the letters on a board hung at a distance, as is usually the case for testing the eyesight of patients who go for diagnosis and treatment of visual deficiencies. Venkannachar, in compliance, lifted his head and opened up his eyes widely.

And lo, what a surprise it was for him! Venkannachar could not believe the reality before him and felt like the whole world being topsy turvy, for he could see the letters on the board and read them too! He could also clearly see the doctor and his attendant standing near him!

For those born blind, it is altogether different, their lives being gloomy, but the fortunate ones that get back their vision after a temporary loss of sight, feel a kind of joy that is beyond the realms of imagination of others. And Venkannachar was experiencing that kind of

With a medical certificate that there was no impairment of his eyesight, Venkannachar joined service again in the same employment.

And as soon as he commenced attending to his official duties, Venkannachar took a few days' leave to visit Mantralaya again. He was of course not questioned by anyone for availing of leave, so soon after joining duty. For, he was on his way to see the benefactor who had restored eyesight to him, when all others had failed in their efforts, in a condition that was beyond hopes of remedy.

To his Lord who had caused his seva to be broken in the middle and yet got him back not only his vision but also his job, Venkannachar offers his prayers most reverentially and with great joy at heart, prostrating before the Brindavana a number of times. Those at the Sri Mutt are left amazing at the ardent devotion exhibited by Venkannachar and start wondering whether it was the same person who had come there as a blind devotee earlier.

In this incident, Sri Raghavendra has restored eyesight to Venkannachar who had lost it under unfortunate circumstances. In yet another episode, one Rajachar develops cataract and as a consequence, his vision gets blurred, but Sri Gururaja prevents its further growth and concomitant deterioration in vision, under bizarre circumstances!

Let us now get absorbed in knowing about it.

**SRI RAGHAVENDRA WILL EXTEND HIS GRACE AT THE APPROPRIATE TIME**

Rajachar was the son of one Haveri Ramachar. He was the priest at the Brindavana of Sri Raghavendraswami, at Kannambadi.

He would do the puja daily in the most orthodox manner, performing every ritual as enjoined in the sastras.

Though struck by poverty, he was noble in his deeds. While he, no doubt, enjoyed the privilege of having his food daily in the mutt, he did not at the same time have sufficient earnings to enjoy a life of comfort.

In such penurious circumstances, Rajachar developed cataract in his eye and soon there was progressive deterioration in his vision.

At one stage, he could not even decorate the Brindavana and apply sandalwood paste to it. As a consequence, he was daily praying to Sri Raghavendra about his predicament, with unbearable agony at heart and tears in his eyes.

‘Gururaja, are you not happy with my service to you. Is it for that reason you have caused this disability in me, just to oust me from here? If so, what I am doing is really incorrect, when there is dissatisfaction in you about the pujas I perform and the alankara and aradhana I do, in worship of you. Therefore, it ill behoves me to continue in

interest to inform the Sri Mutt early and voluntarily leave from here.' He thus wept in front of the Brindavana, groping as he was for decorating it that day, in the usual manner.

Just then, Rajachar was informed that somebody had come there to meet him.

After completion of the puja, Rajachar came out to see the person who had come to meet him.

The stranger, after paying his respects to Rajachar, introduced himself as one coming from Malleswaram.

'It is to meet me you have come all the way from there?'

'Yes, it is to see you only. Not only that, I have come to take you also with me.'

'Sir, what are you telling? I have done nothing wrong....'

'Swami, why are you panicky? I am a doctor and I am here to take you for the treatment that I have to render to you for restoration of your eyesight.'

'I have never seen you before and further I do not even have the necessary finances to have an eye operation at this stage.'

'Even if you should be giving me money, I will not accept it. It has been ordained by Sri Raghavendra that I should render you free service, in the performance of the operation.'

'Sir, what are you telling? Has Sri Gururaja given you such direction?'

‘Yes please... Sri Raghavendraswami has appeared in my dream and graced me by enlightening me that I should meet you and take you to my place and perform the surgery... Later I must also escort you and leave you back at your place.’

Rajachar, on hearing this, became excited and elated and with tears of joy blinding his eyes, vented out, ‘Appa Gururaja! In answer to my fervent prayers to you, you have sent the proper person to help me.... considering me as being worthy of your mercy, even in the midst of millions of devotees worshipping you, thus gracing me with your infinite compassion.’ He was also mentally visualising Sri Gururaja before him at that instant, when suddenly he heard the doctor’s voice calling him, “Swami”.

‘Swami! You should come with me to the hospital today itself. I have already spoken to the mutt authorities about the matter.’

‘Yes please, most happily I shall come with you,’ said the priest and followed the doctor to Malleswaram.

At the doctor’s clinic, Rajachar was operated upon and after convalescence there, he was brought back to Kannambadi by the doctor himself. It hardly needs to be mentioned that his sight had been completely restored, after the removal of the cataract formation.

This incident happened in the end of July 1991.

It is said that God alone is the Messiah for orphans and how true it has been in the case of Rajachar!

Whatever be the problems troubling our mind, if we place them before Sri Rayaru and perform our duties

honestly and in the proper way, without being sceptical whether or not our heart's desire will be fulfilled, Sri Raghavendra is sure to grace us and find solution to our miseries.

In yet another incident relating to the eye of a devotee, Sri Gururaja's supernatural powers are again in evidence and in the process his greatness too is laid bare.

We shall move on to it now.

### **EYE TREATMENT RENDERED IN A DREAM**

In the earlier among the incidents cited thus far, the eyesight lost by a devotee is restored, while in the second one a doctor is sent for giving free treatment. And presently, we are going to see Gururaja himself appearing in the dream of a devotee and curing the malady in his eye. One may wonder whether a treatment given in a dream could in fact have been effective in reality, after the conclusion of the dream. But please indulge in reading the occurrence recounted here, to know the truth.

Srirangam V.S.Krishnamurthi Rao was an ardent devotee of Sri Raghavendra and a vocalist, well-accomplished in rendering music programmes.

He had gone to Mantralaya in 1955 for the aradhana celebrations. He had, in fact, been invited there to give a vocal concert during the aradhana festivities. But unfortunately, a boil had developed in his eye just before

leaving for Mantralaya, making it impossible for him to even open the eyelid. His vision was therefore totally blocked in that eye. The time at his disposal before leaving for Mantralaya was hardly sufficient to have any treatment then.

Sri Rao was dismayed as to how he could sing before an audience with one of his eyes being totally disfunctional then. He therefore stood before Gururaja and prayed for relief from the affliction troubling him.

That night, Sri Krishnamurthi Rao had a dream. And in the dream, Sri Rao is subjected to an operation and the infected eye gets cured. The doctor asks as his fees Rs.100/- from Sri Krishnamurthi Rao.

‘How can I give the amount in this condition please?’

‘But you will definitely give the amount, is it not?’

‘Yes, I shall give it most certainly, but please let me be allowed some time for it.’

‘Before you leave Mantralaya, you must give me the fees and then only depart from the place.’

‘Yes please, I shall do so,’ says Krishnamurthi Rao.

It was early morning the next day.

Sri Krishnamurthi Rao slowly opens his eyes. He does not feel any discomfort in the infected eye. He rubs that eye and does not feel the existence of a boil in the place it was troubling him earlier.

Immediately, he feels a chillness passing through his body. He then asks those around him about the absence of the boil and they too confirm that there was nothing

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abnormal in his eye. Sri Rao then shouts 'Guru Raghavendra,' in great joy, drawing the attention of everyone around.

'I thought the removal of the boil in my eye through an operation performed in my dream was only my imagination. Oh God, is it true? How has it been possible? Oh Raghavendra, Mahaprabho, how merciful you are and what a grace it is!' exclaims Sri Krishnamurthi Rao.

Sri Suyamindra Thirtha, the then pontiff, at the conclusion of the music programme, does the usual honour to the artiste and hands over to Sri Krishnamurthi Rao, the conveyance expenses to get back to his place and in addition another Rs.100/-.

'Swami, why are you giving me Rs.100/- in excess?'

'It is for some reason,' says Sri Suyamindra and at once Sri Krishnamurthi Rao is reminded of the doctor's fees he was asked to pay.

It needs no mention that Sri Krishnamurthi Rao gave that amount as an offering in the Hundi to Sri Gururaja and returned to his place with great happiness and contentment at heart.

In the incident where Sri Mallappa Shinde had figured, Sri Raghavendra appeared in person and performed the operation in the guise of the doctor attending on Shinde, but in the case of Sri Krishnamurthi Rao, although the treatment is given in his dream, the malady is cured in reality. Oh, how mysterious are the

Sri V.S.Krishnamurthi Rao is the brother of a distinguished personality and the celebrity referred to was one gifted with the ability to deliver religious discourses uninterruptedly for hours together, interspersed with musical renderings appropriate to the subject. He was none other than the late V.S.Venkatramana Rao, who had the knack of captivating his audience with his proficiency in sangita upanyasa.

I had the opportunity of meeting Sri Venkatramana Rao on a few occasions at the Brindavana of Sri Raghavendraswami, at Tiruvallikkeni. I have also heard him rendering his religious discourses on a few occasions that were so absorbing - the free flow of his thoughts punctuated with musical notations, carrying the audience to a heavenly setting.

The episode relating to the amount of Rs.10,000/- made available to a devotee (cited in an earlier chapter) is one told by Sri Venkatramana Rao, during the aradhana of Sri Sujayeendra Thirtha.

Devotees who had read part I of 'Sri Raghavendra Mahimai' (Tamil edition) have written to me about several mysterious happenings that have taken place in the lives of those known to them. A few of them find place here, in the chapters that follow. The remaining ones, as also those that the readers may submit to me after a perusal of this, will be published in part III.



**SRI RAGHAVENDRA IN  
"SRI RAGHAVENDRA MAHIMAI"**

It was the early days when part I of "Sri Raghavendra Mahimai" (Tamil edition) had just been published. At that time, a person who had read it, came to see me. He told me that he was from Mettupalayam and most emotionally narrated how he had stumbled across the book in Higginbothams and after buying a copy of it had perused it daily and got himself absorbed in it.

He said, 'Till about 15 years back, I had not known about Sri Raghavendra. Once, a friend of mine, by name Muthusundaram, gave me a picture and told me that it was of Sri Raghavendra and that worship of him with unwavering faith and devotion will efface all miseries, leading one to a life of happiness and peace. He was emphatic that it was true and when I heard that advice, it kindled my interest to follow what he had said. Thus, I started visiting the Brindavana of Sri Raghavendra in Coimbatore and in 1981, when another one was consecrated in the Press colony on the way to Mettupalayam, I became a regular visitor to that holy place. But, it was only after reading your work that I came to know more about Sri Raghavendra.

I have really been carried away so much by your pleasant way of presenting things and the story telling proficiency, that the historical facts set forth by you create the impression of their being in enactment, right before my eyes.' Sri Venkatesa Iyer had thus written at length

and in glowing terms about what he perceived as the distinguishing features of my book.

Several others have also praised the work in person, as also through letters. But above all these, the Rayar seva that Sri Venkatesa Iyer had undertaken, is a holy one and of a unique kind, paving the way for many others to follow suit.

After his buying a copy of the book at Higginbothams, he came to Chennai again about four months later and met me, only then. He was a person who had been well employed and his children are now in good status, earning well.

Sri Venkatesa Iyer expressed to me a desire that three copies of the book be given to him, promising their sale to the interested devotees at his place and assuring prompt remittance of the sale proceeds. He had the noble mind that others also should benefit from a perusal of the book.

Soon, he accomplished what he had in his mind and subsequently started taking twenty copies at a time by parcel post, selling them in due course and sending the amounts regularly.

Sri Iyer also told me later that he had vowed to distribute copies of the book to 108 devotees and I was really stunned that the book should be carrying so much influence amongst its readers.

Earlier, I had written about Sri Raghavendra in a small way only, bringing out a few publications. And when

was published, many people expressed how such a voluminous publication could be purchased at a price that is on the high side. Others commented behind my back about the price, without telling me anything directly. No doubt this created apprehensions in my mind also. But Sri Gururaja has falsified all those pessimistic views. The book, quite unexpectedly, was well received by the public and like Sri Venkatesa Iyer of Mettupalayam, many readers were directed to me by Sri Raghavendra, providing me valuable feedback about it.

The well known and affluent Arunachalam Chettiar of Trichy (known as Star Arunachalam Chettiar) buys copies of this book often and distributes them to others, free of cost.

A reader from Singapore, unknown to me, bought 500 copies at a time for the members of his association, leaving me surprised and elated.

The copies of this book have mostly been sold by word of mouth amongst the devotees of Sri Raghavendra and not through book stalls or retail outlets. There was a letter from an avid reader saying, 'I was travelling in a train. I got a copy of the book from a co-passenger and read a few chapters. As the train reached the station where the passenger had to alight, I just noted your address from the book and am now writing this to you. Please send me a copy at once.'

Another person had written that he borrowed a copy from a co-traveller and had read it during his flight. Yet another one had indented for a copy saying that he had borrowed the book from a library and perused it. And

One Smt.Savitri has written a letter from Cheyyar that has caused me to wonder what kind of a magnetic influence Sri Raghavendra has created in the minds of the readers, to be so much attracted towards the book. Her missive reads, 'I live in the front portion of a house, where four families reside in different tenements. At the end of the house is a small room in which the land lady stays. One night, after dinner, she consumed some sleeping tablets and went to bed. In about half an hour's time, a tenant living in one of the other portions, knocked at her door to give her something urgently. His loud tapping of the door woke up all others in the tenements there, but not the landlady! Since the woman was unresponsive for quite some time, the others also joined him in his efforts to wake her up. But the one in slumber did not respond at all, causing an anxiety as to whether something untoward could have happened to her as a result of any overdosage of the sedative she was habituated to taking, before retiring to bed. At that time, I was reading your book, "Sri Raghavendra Mahimai" with great indulgence and devotion, in my portion of the house. And when there was so much noise outside, I could hardly stay indoors, aroused as I was by the curiosity to know what it was all about. As I moved towards the landlady's room, I was holding the book closed in my hand, with the index finger placed as a tab on the page I was perusing then.

Like the rest, I too pounded the door, but it was not opened. Then, suddenly it occurred to me in a flash as it were, that I should hold the book "Raghavendra Mahimai" against the door and do the knocking on the

wooden panel, meditating upon Sri Raghavendra and praying to him, while engaged in the act. I tried it with great faith and devotion and lo, the door opened instantaneously, with the dumbfounded lady emerging from inside and querying the people there, "Oh, what is this? Why so many people around to wake me up?"

And what a mysterious occurrence it was! Despite the efforts of so many persons around for well over three quarters of an hour, the door had remained closed, but when the book came in contact with it, it was thrown open!

We then narrated to the lady what all had taken place outside, which she heard with awe and wonderment.'

Smt. Savitri has written about a few more incidents, but only as an example, I have cited the one recounted thus far.

In a similar vein, one N.Alagappa Tamizhan from Ariyakudi has written about himself and the publication mentioned. He has said, 'I am a Tamil pundit and a young recluse, given to natural food and practising naturopathy. In a small place near Karaikudi, called Ariyakudi (famed as South Tirupati), I am living for the past four years in an ashram-like cottage in the company of my Guru Hrishikesh Swami Sivananda, leading a life of absolute seclusion from outside world.

I have been sick since January last, afflicted by a nervous disorder for well over ten months. In the midst of this suffering, I got a copy of your publication "Sri Raghavendra Mahimai" through my mother. After

25% progress in my health and slowly I am getting better. I am confident that I should be alright, ere long. Your devotion towards Sri Raghavendra and your proficiency in the art of writing have touched my heart and your book has truly been ambrosial to me. I am writing this with a kind of bliss that could be felt, when nectar is tasted.'

As a matter of fact, I have, in the chapter under the caption, "Jolarpettai Balraj.graced", portrayed Sri Balraj even before meeting him, basing my observations upon what I had read about him in journals and the facts known through one Sri Swaminathan, who used to come to me for purchase of books. To put it succinctly, I had not heard Balraj's religious discourses, till then.

It was my wont to visit the Brindavana at Ayanavaram every Thursday. Far from the madding crowd of Chennai metropolis, Ayanavaram Brindavana is a place of serenity and calmness, the Brindavana presenting an imposing look and creating a reverential awe, even from a distance. The rituals at that holy place are a routine affair, observed meticulously and in conformity with what is spelt out in the scriptures. Their ceremonial adherence on Thursdays is something unique, particularly the "Swasti" at that mutt having a speciality about it, giving peace of mind to those who congregate there.

The president of Ayanavaram Sri Mutt, Sri Sripad, had himself experienced the mysterious powers of Sri Rayaru, like many other devotees all over. While the supernatural occurrences at the Ayanavaram Brindavana will be covered exhaustively in Part III, presently we shall confine ourselves to knowing more about Sri Balraj.



One Thursday, a person flaunting religious marks like Sri Rayaru, was giving a discourse on the greatness of Sri Raghavendra, singing his glory to the accompaniment of instrumental music. He was immersed in his task with so much devotion and dedication that he was not conscious of the surroundings then.

My friend Balaji asked me, 'Do you know this person, he is Jolarpettai....' and before he could complete his sentence, I said, 'Is it Balraj?'. 'Yes, he mentioned about you also,' said my friend. And my brother Harikrishna and another Murali, selling books there, also told me later that Sri Balraj had made a reference about me, in the midst of his upanyasa.

It was after the upanyasa that day, that Balraj and I met each other for the first time. And what a pleasant meeting it was!

Sri V.Ramu of SMSO, who takes keen interest in my development, told Balraj on that occasion, 'Just as you render your discourses with such clarity, Sri Sathiyathan too has written Sri Raghavendra's life story in Tamil, in a lucid and intelligible style.'

And surprisingly, Balraj responded saying, 'It is through the blessings of Sri Rayaru that I now have the privilege of meeting Sri Amman Sathiyathan, whose book I have been totally relying upon for my discourses and for which I owe him a profound debt of gratitude,' paying spontaneous obeisance to me in the presence of all those who were there. This gesture of Sri Balraj brought instantaneous joy in my heart and made me feel,

“Appa, Gururaja! What a great honour it is to me, for having written about you.”

It is rare to come across persons like Balraj, with such magnanimity at heart. He had not memorised and delivered what I had written, but had only drawn a few anecdotes from my book, which he made use of in his discourse, enacting the role of the characters figuring therein, in his own inimitable style. In stark contrast to this is the manner in which a person has rendered my entire work in poetic form, without even mentioning a word of thanks by way of acknowledgement, that smacks of a mean mentality.

Perhaps, if I had met Balraj before writing about him, I could have penned more on him. It was in 1994 he had come to my office with Sri Krishnamurthi Rao of Tirupattur, to invite me for the aradhana of Sri Raghavendraswami. And for more than five hours on that day, we conversed about Sri Raghavendra and his mystic deeds, which will find place in Part III.

Adverting to my book on Sri Raghavendra, oh, how many have benefited from a perusal of it and experienced also mysterious happenings in their lives! Is it on account of what I have written? No, certainly not, as Sri Gururaja's Divine powers exist not only in his mrithika, but also in devout writings on him, in which he is ever present and reveals his supernatural influence.

We have seen in a detailed manner in Part I how a sishya was able to read the minds of others, when he was handling the ochre robes of Sri Raghavendra on the bank of the Cauvery river, but was totally oblivious of those

stone. And again when he took them in his hands for rinsing them, he was in a position to explain to the three Brahmins (who were talking to him then) regarding what they were doubting in their minds and discussing about.

The incident is mentioned here, only to drive home the truth that anything connected with Sri Raghavendra, carries in it his mysterious power, and experiencing such influence is something that is related to the depth of one's own devotion towards Sri Gururaja.

It is the belief of many that steadfast bhakti towards Sri Raghavendraswami can lead one to a life of happiness and prosperity.

A large number of readers have written heaps of praise on "Sri Raghavendra Mahimai", immediately after perusing it, penning their feelings in the process. Apart from this, many of them are also sending me letters narrating various occurrences in their lives, as also those of others known to them, attributable to the grace of Sri Raghavendra.

In this book, we shall later be seeing some incidents, mentioned in a few of those letters.

One R. Kuppanna Rao had written a letter from Sirkali in 1989 and its perusal sent a chillness through my spine. It reveals how Sri Gururaja, at times, causes fulfilment of even the seemingly unattainable cravings of those who have absolute faith in him - an episode that would melt the hearts of readers. The incident finds narration in the next chapter, but before delving into it, there are a few things to be mentioned about Sri Kuppanna Rao.

Sri Kuppanna Rao is a M.A;B.T. with a long list of other academic qualifications like Vidya Ratna, Sahitya Vibhushana, Darshanalankara, Shikshanakala Praveen, Hindi Pracharak, etc. Despite his erudition, he has always been humble in saying that in the beginning he too was like Venkanna, without any education and whatever degrees he has acquired later on, is only due to the blessings of Sri Rayaru.

Sri Rao had the misfortune of losing his wife who was always a source of strength to him, equally sharing at all times his devotional services to Sri Raghavendra. At the time he was griefstricken on account of the calamity, he strangely had a dream one night.

And in the dream, somebody wakes him up and tells, 'In a week's time, a bosom friend of yours will come in search of you and through his influence you will go to a big event. You will have the privilege of witnessing certain happenings associated with a great man, who will also be very powerful.'

But nobody like that turns up, but his brother who comes to his place gives him a copy of "Sri Raghavendra Mahimi". Sri Rao, who started reading the book from that day, has written to me about his pleasant experiences, in the following manner:

'In the beginning, I mingled with the family of Sri Venkatanatha. Later, I moved with them to Kumbakonam and from there to Thanjavur, where I participated in the mahapattabhishekam celebrations. The durbar of nawabs, meeting different individuals,

consecration of Maha Brindavana, the Brindavana pravesha, the Thomas Munroe episode and the like, could really be seen in my mind's eye, through your book. It occurred to me then that your book was playing the role of a friend and also was a source of counsel to me. Indeed your seva is worth the trouble you have taken in your life. It is something beyond the realms of mundane existence.'

Sri Rao had brilliantly sketched in his letter that true to what he had been told in his dream by an unknown person, my book had been a good companion and a guide to him and through it he has had the good fortune of knowing about the various incidents that took place in the life of a great saint. He had concluded the letter citing a bizarre experience of his in which he was the recipient of Sri Raghavendra's bountiful grace, which episode is covered in the next few pages.

### **DELICIOUS FOOD IN A MANGO GROVE!**

It was some time in 1946-47.

There was a land dispute at Chennasamudram village, situated at the meeting point of Vellore, Arcot roads.

Sri Kuppanna Rao started for that village in connection with the affair, in the company of his uncle Bhimanna Rao, nephew Nagaraja Rao and his friend Srinivasa Rao.

They all reached Vellore first. Vellore was satirically described in olden days as a place without a temple

(pointing to the absence of an idol for worship), a river without water (referring to the dry Palar river) and a fort without a king. (Sri Jalakanteswara has since been consecrated there with his consort and several other demi-goddesses).

The group that had gone to Vellore, stayed there for four days to meet an acquaintance, but he was not in town at that time. During the entire period of their stay at Vellore, the friends bound for Channasamudram could not have their bath and had to wear soiled clothes only. In the same condition, they visited Channasamudram too and were returning to vellore after finishing their work at that place.

It was hot even by 9 A.M. The Palar bed lies between Melvisharam and Kizhvisharam, near Vellore. The Palar river, bereft of water, was then presenting a sandy stretch below the road bridge and washermen were found to be engaged in their task of rinsing the clothes, with the water available from the temporary pits they had dug in the river bed. Bheemanna Rao, on seeing those pools, suggested to Kuppanna Rao that they could take their bath there and have the clothes washed and dried up, before journeying further. The others also felt that it was a godsend for all of them and as such got down to the river bed.

By the time they finished their bath and had the clothes washed and dried, it was well past 11 A.M. The sun was blazing hot and all of them were feeling the pinch of hunger. From the river they had to walk 2 kms to the Main Road and then proceed to Arcot.

In the scorching sun, they started walking and after crossing the river, entered a place of thick vegetation, from where they could not behold any signs of habitation nearby. In that unfamiliar environment, they were getting overawed as to how they can get to the Main Road to catch a bus and reach Arcot for their lunch. The heat that was unbearable, as also their hunger, and the uncertainty about the availability of food, caused frustration to them and slackened the pace of their walking.

Suddenly, one of them quipped, 'How nice it would be, if we should get delicious items of food now, with payasam and the like....'

'Well, we can only content ourselves with a Barmecide's feast. Can we ever long for all those delicacies in this jungle?' responded another.

'Why should it not be possible?' observed Kuppanna Rao.

'Oh, what a fun it is! I only wanted to fantacize about them in these inhospitable surroundings, but you seem to be pinning your hopes on the availability of such items right now!'

'Why, they will surely be at arm's reach for us soon. I shall pray to Sri Gururaja and he will certainly fulfil our desire...'

'All these can happen only in stories and not in reality. In the forest, we can see only wild creatures and if we escape the possible dangers from them, that itself should be like a grand feast for us and gladden our

hearts. Please, therefore, hasten your steps without making noise,' said another.

Accordingly, they moved some distance in a cat-like tread, when suddenly they felt that somebody was calling them from behind. But, without even looking back, they quickened their pace, fearing that some bad elements may be following them to rob them of their valuables.

And soon, a bicycle came there and obstructed their way and when Kuppanna Rao looked at the rider, he was simply astounded. Yes, he was the Tahsildar of Gingee and a friend of Kuppanna Rao.

'Even from a distance, I could make out that it was yourself and therefore I was following you and drawing your attention, but why did you start walking fast, without even seeing behind?'

No one answered the question, as all of them had thought otherwise about the voice they had heard from behind them.

'I could not even imagine that I would see you here. Be that so, please bring everyone with you.'

'Where to?'

'There is a function here to celebrate my daughter being in the family way. Plantain leaves are just being laid for serving food, please do come and partake in the lunch.'

'Is there a function in this forest?'

'Yes, behind these bushes, there is even a street.'

'Oh, street is it?'



‘Since he is inviting us, we shall go with him first and learn about other things later,’ prompted another person to Kuppanna Rao, being unable to bear his hunger then.

A variety of vegetable preparations, several other delicacies, payasam and appalam were served with rice at the place they were taken to and they all had a sumptuous lunch. Later, in the evening, they had snacks too, before they reached Arcot at night. Actually, they did not even feel like taking dinner at night - so heavy was the lunch and the refreshments they had.

‘Look, Sri Raghavendra, true to my prayers to him, has given us not only timely food, but also a grand feast, when it was least expected.’

‘Kuppanna Rao, you have been telling this often and I have been keeping quiet, in order not to hurt your feelings’ said one of the others.

‘What are you driving at, please?’

‘Let us not talk about this, but divert our conversation to some other subject.’

‘No, no. Your statement seems to suggest that this is not a grace of Sri Rayaru, but an event that has taken place by accident’.

‘Yes, it is true.’

‘Please don’t say like that. I have been exhilarating that in answer to my prayers after the bath in the river, Sri Rayaru has sent my friend and through him has fulfilled my longing for a sumptuous lunch (with delicacies) - proving that he graces those who approach him with

utmost devotion, bestowing on them the favours sought of him.'

'In fact, I did not want to offend your feelings and that is why I kept quiet. Since you are repeatedly telling that it is only through the grace of Sri Rayaru that we have been able to get it, I am feeling vexed by that contention of yours. If we had not got down in the Palar river and instead proceeded straight to Arcot, we could have still eaten our lunch in a hotel there - that too a special meal!'

On hearing these words, Kuppanna Rao kept quiet, visibly upset about his friend's retort.

'Please leave aside those controverises. By 4 A.M. tomorrow, we have to start for Vellore. Therefore, let us retire to bed' said one of those in the group.

'It is not for argument sake that I said so. It has all along been my belief that even a morsel of food that I take is a divine mercy and that is what I was trying to put across.'

'No, it is not as you say. Come to Vellore tomorrow. We are going to have the best available coffee there in the morning and in the noon a delicious lunch, and to get those, Sri Raghavendra's blessing is not necessary. I can make the necessary arrangements for them and provide you those'.

Kuppanna Rao was silent, after hearing these words.

'It is proverbial that when the crow sat on the tree, the fruit came down. Likewise, what Kuppanna Rao had expressed as a desire, has just materialised. It was just

Sri Raghavendra's supernatural power in that. On the contrary, anything can be bought by money power these days and I shall demonstrate this to you in Vellore.'

Kuppanna Rao wanted to tell, 'Yes, money is of course necessary in the present day world. But one cannot attain everything by mere money power, as it is divine grace that plays the key role in one's life,' but he restrained himself.

While everyone slept well that night, Kuppanna Rao alone was awake and kept pondering.

'Gururaja, I have heard people telling that you immediately respond to the call of true devotees. I was happy that you have acted so in my case also. My friend has no doubt said that there is no truth in this belief. But he must have uttered it only for argument sake. He is truly a good person and it is up to you to enlighten him that what he feels is wrong.' So thinking, Kuppanna Rao dozed off to sleep.

It was early morning the next day. Every one started for Vellore, as planned the previous night. Kuppanna Rao was chanting to himself Sri Raghavendra stotra, during the journey.

They were nearing Vellore, when there was a change in the face of Kuppanna Rao's friend. And his eyes were then searching for something outside. Yes, he could not find any shops/hotels open at that time. Thinking that it was too early - being the pre-dawn hour - they reached Vellore, but found a big surprise awaiting them. For, not a single shop was open that day, as complete bandh was being observed in the town then.

There was absolutely no scope to get even a cup of coffee at that time and the friend who had thrown the challenge was rendered speechless!

‘Oh, what an ordeal is this? What I see right before my eyes now is quite different from what I spoke yesterday! Indeed, a bizarre situation it is. And of what use is money, if shops are not open! What happened yesterday was undoubtedly on account of the grace of Sri Raghavendra. There is no doubt at all about it now. Truly, if he wills, he can give a feast even in a forest or grove, but if his grace be not forthcoming, one cannot have even a cup of coffee, despite the luxuries that one may be enjoying in one’s life,’ lamented the friend who had debated the matter the previous day. He then stared at Kuppanna Rao and could make out from his deportment how much he had been affected. So he took everyone to his friend Venkatachari’s house (the latter was an advocate at Vellore) and there they all had their morning wash and coffee. Later, they left for Katpadi and had another cup of coffee there, before starting for Tirupati. In the afternoon too, they could not have food and had to be content with coffee only.

If Sri Raghavendraswami is prayed to with deep devotion, he will come to help his devotee at the appropriate time or will at least send someone for succour. An episode that establishes this truth is covered in the next chapter.

**DESCENDS FROM A PICTURE!**

I have already mentioned about the devotional service that Sri S.Venkateswara Iyer of Mettupalayam has been rendering. He would, without fail, call on me every time he comes to Chennai and share with me something or the other about the mysterious and powerful influences of Sri Raghavendra on the devotees of the saint. I shall take up here a couple of incidents in the lives of devotees, as narrated to me by Sri Iyer, reserving the rest for Part III.

Seshadri was a retired employee of the Electricity Board. He was living with his wife and children in Mettupalayam, but belonged to a place called Kumarapalayam. His mother was living with her youngest son, at Kumarapalayam. Seshadri was a person with great attachment towards his mother.

One day, Seshadri received a telegram from his brother, informing that their mother was in a serious condition and was sinking and that his presence there was required immediately. Without delay, Seshadri reached the place in great dismay and was in tears, on seeing his mother suffering in what was almost the last stages of her existence.

The unique position of a mother in human life, has been well portrayed by our forefathers in the expression that no place of worship is holier than a mother. And when such a mother, as epitomised in the saying, was in death bed, all her children - Seshadri and the siblings - were by her side, with agony writ large on their faces.

Seshadri's mother was suffering from kidney failure and as a result, the discharge of urine had stopped, with all the attendant complications. She was panting for breath and in that state, had to be rushed in a taxi to Erode, for medical aid.

In the hospital at Erode, it was opined that the patient's condition warranted a specialist's attention and that she should at once be taken to the C.M.C. Hospital at Vellore, where there was scope for better medical attention and treatment.

Although the children were deeply shocked on hearing this and had lost hopes of her recovery, they wanted to render her the best possible treatment, till her end. So they started making arrangements to take her to Vellore. But, the mother had other ideas and was not in agreement with what the children were proposing to do.

'Look here, all of you. Please take me to our house. I am sure I will not survive and unnecessarily if I am to be taken to Vellore, I may die on the way itself. Instead, I would like to breathe my last in our own house and all of you should fulfil this last wish of mine,' said the mother, leaving everyone in tears.

Seshadri's sister was an ardent devotee of Sri Raghavendra. After what she had heard from the doctor, she started praying, 'Gururaja, it is a universal law that those born in the mundane world should die one day or the other. If my mother is to become alright, the malady could be cured here itself. In the present condition of her health, can she live till she reaches Vellore? In deference

that you should grace her survival for a few more months and I leave that responsibility to you.'

Before long, they all reached Kumarapalayam with their ailing mother, who had by then lost her speech as well, creating anxiety to everyone.

It was 10 P.M., when everybody retired to bed. Seshadri and his sister lied down on either side of their mother, to look after her needs. As they were thoroughly exhausted, they dozed off in no time.

At midnight, Seshadri and his sister woke up, on hearing their mother making some involuntary sound. She was, in fact groaning in pain, uttering the cry, 'Oh, please don't do that....I cannot bear the pain...'

'Amma, Amma...what is happening to you? Have you had any frightening dream?'

There was no response to their call and the mother closed her eyes and dropped asleep. The siblings thought at that moment that she must have had a bad dream and so they lied down again.

Soon, there was a louder moaning from their mother and when the son and daughter got up, they found to their surprise and relief too, that their mother had instinctively and unconsciously passed urine that had remained blocked for so long, making the floor wet.

Seshadri's sister then changed the saree of her mother and after washing her hands and feet, offered her obeisances before the picture of Sri Raghavendra. It was 4 A.M., by then.

At dawn it was noticed that the bloating of the patient's bladder had subsided and her face too had brightened up. She was given coffee and after some time, Seshadri asked her, 'Amma, yesterday night you were moaning so much and later cried aloud involuntarily - did you have any dream?'

'Oh son, there was no dream at all. I was thinking only of Sri Raghavendra, when there was blockage of urine in my system and I was struggling to breathe or speak. And at night he came down from the picture there and sitting near me applied pressure on my abdomen in the navel region, with two of his fingers. I could not bear the pain then and cried aloud. It was then that I was woken up, but he disappeared then. Later, he had come again and done the same. I had again cried in pain, when the entire quantity of urine blocked in my system, got expelled from my bladder. Now I am feeling relieved,' explained the old lady to the amazement of those around her. No doubt, everyone was dumbfounded then at the mercy and power of Sri Raghavendra.

Seshadri's sister then fell before the picture of Sri Raghavendraswami, like one possessed by a spirit. For, it was he who had answered her prayers and treated her mother's illness, restoring the ailing one back to her normal health.

Sri Venkateswara Iyer has further written in his letter that the lady who had been given up as dead by the doctors, lived for a further period of three years, before reaching the feet of the Lord. He has also pointed out that Seshadri's family has been continuing to have the grace of Sri Raghavendra, even after this incident. Another



occurrence reported by Sri Venkateswara Iyer had taken place at Mantralaya, the place where the Moola Brindavana of Sri Raghavendra exists.

It is a popular belief that Sri Raghavendra extends his grace to many a devotee in the early hours of the day, on the banks of the Tungabhadra river. And a good lot has been written about this matter.

In part I, I have written an incident under the caption, 'Sri Raghavendra's miracle in the Tungabhadra.' In this writing also, we have already seen a few happenings that have taken place in the Tungabhadra river.

We shall now scan in brief another such event that had happened there.

### **WILL EXTEND HELP, WHEN IN DISTRESS**

T.A. Ramaswami Iyer was a devout person and a philanthropist. He was born in a family not so well off, but by his own efforts and the grace of the Almighty, he later prospered and became affluent.

He loved to talk about divine matters and be involved in devotional service. The mental peace that one would derive from association with the spiritually oriented ones, can only be experienced and not described in words. Such an influence will tend to help development of certain traits like clarity of thought, and a self-confidence that with divine help and grace, there need be no fear or anxiety about anything.

Ramaswami Iyer had to receive a large sum due to him from a government department. He had been fighting hard to get it, but was unsuccessful in his efforts and at one stage it was even doubtful if he would ever get the payment.

As a last resort, after prayer to Sri Gururaja, he filed a law suit, for recovery of the amount. But the matter dragged on and on, the uncertainty about the end-result always haunting Iyer.

‘Appa Gururaja, this is my last effort. I should be victorious in this. You have taken birth in this mundane world to establish morality and righteousness and I look to you only to see that justice is rendered to me in this matter. I must come to Mantralaya with a favourable judgement in my hand and perform seva before your Brindavana, to fulfil my vow. And I look to you only to grace me this,’ supplicated Ramaswami Iyer to Sri Raghavendra, from the depth of his heart.

Being human, we may often feel a sense of despondency that after all, to get even what is rightfully due to us, we have to struggle a lot. In fact, such instances are aplenty in my own life and many a time I have succeeded in achieving my goal, only after incessantly fighting against the odds. I propose to deal with this subject exclusively and in an elaborate manner in my one hundredth book (the narration in first person here bears reference to what the original author in Tamil, Sri Amman Sathiyathan, has said).

We may often feel dejected that when we have so

be obstacles and hardship in our way. But Lord Krishna has lucidly explained this in the Gita, attributing them to the past deeds of the individual, in the earlier births.

The Pandavas, despite their conciliatory overtures, could not get what was rightfully due to them and had to per force wage a war against Duryodhana, to get their share of the parental heritage.

Ravana, in full knowledge that coveting another's spouse is a sinful act, fell a prey to lust and carried away Sita stealthily and kept her confined in the Ashoka vana. But, how did Rama retrieve her? When his ambassadors of goodwill drew blank in their efforts to make saner counsel prevail over the demon king, Rama was constrained to take up arms against him, to free Sita from his hold.

While even divine avatars had to face such ordeals on earth, what of us mortals, who have to be always dependent on the mercy of the Lord and of the divine messengers, for our very survival! Surely, the only way for us is to have steadfast belief in them and be devout, so that we may achieve success through their grace.

Ramaswami Iyer was a person who had immense faith in Sri Raghavendra. At last, by the grace of the Guru, he won the Court case and for thanksgiving and fulfilment of his vow he went to Mantralaya, one of his sons accompanying him. There he took bath in the Tungabhadra river and had darshan of Sri Raghavendra, with great exuberance.

He vowed to perform sankalpa seva and indulged in it, both in the morning and evening, for a few days.

On completion of the seva, he proposed to catch a train at Mantralayam Road station at 6.15 A.M. the next day, for journey to Coimbatore. So he started preparations for it during the night itself and told his son that they should get up by 4.30 A.M. the next day, for an early bath in the river and darshan of the Brindavana, after which they should be departing from the place.

The next morning, Ramaswami Iyer woke up suddenly in the wee hours and found that it was already 4.20 A.M. He alerted his son at once and both wended their way to the Tungabhadra, for their bath.

Strangely, not a soul was present there at that time, although normally by then there may be a few devotees going to the river or returning towards the Mutt, after a dip in the cold water of the Tungabhadra. As their eyes could not behold anybody being around there, they continued their walk to the river, thinking of Sri Raghavendra and uttering to themselves Sri Raghavendra stotra (to overcome the fear in their hearts).

And as they neared the waters, both felt some hesitation and awe, on hearing the fierce flow of the river at that time. The darkness engulfing the area and the absence of any human presence there at that unearthly hour, scared them and restrained them from getting into the water for a dip. In such an uninviting atmosphere, they were even thinking of returning to their cottage. But suddenly they heard someone walking nearby and stopped their tread on the rocky stretch.

It was an orthodox Brahmin, who was seen going to the river. He reached the waters soon and sat on a rock, with his back turned towards the river, chanting stotras.

The father and son, on seeing the person, gathered courage and had their bath in the holy water. Thereafter, they started walking towards the bank, looking at the person behind them, now and then. And in a few moments, he was not to be seen, all of a sudden, leaving them in perplexity.

They thought he might have entered the waters for a dip, but soon realized that it was not so. Also, they knew that he had not gone ahead of them and so were left wondering how he could have, in an instant, vanished from the scene.

And it was then that it flashed in their minds that the person who had come there from nowhere to help them in their distress (when it was dark all around) was none else than Sri Raghavendra Guru, the Lord of that place.

Later, when they were near the precincts of the Mutt, they found that the gates of both the Manchali Amman temple and the Brindavana, had not been opened still. So, they went back to their cottage to come again for darshan after some time. And as soon as they reached the cottage and looked at their watches, they were surprised to know that it was only 4.15 A.M. then.

In all probability, when they woke up at 3.20 A.M. and saw the watch, they must have felt that it was 4.20 A.M. and truly this had enabled them to have darshan of Sri Rayaru, when they were at the river for their bath. And undoubtedly, it was Sri Ramaswamy Iyer's unwavering faith in Sri Raghavendra that had earned him the reward of the saint's darshan, for which the Guru himself had created the circumstances - like waking him up early and

making him believe the time then to be one hour later than what it really was.

Paranur Mahatma Sri Sri Krishna Premi, often expounds the following, in his religious discourses:

‘Even at the time of Krishna avatar, without the grace of the Lord, the darshan of Sri Krishna could not have been possible. But even in the present Kali yuga, if divine grace should be there, one can certainly have darshan of the Almighty.’

On the same reasoning as spelt out above, we cannot feel the presence of Sri Raghavendra, even if he should be walking aside us and we be keeping awake till the early hours, in expectation that he could be seen in the wee hours when he comes to the Tungabhadra for his bath. But that the circumstances for such darshan can be created only by him, is the message that we get from the experience of Sri Ramaswami Iyer.

It may be recalled that even Mallappa Shinde, who was at Raichur (close to Mantralaya) could have his Mantralaya darshan, only belatedly. But an aged person of West Tambaram, who could not financially afford for a journey to Mantralaya, has darshan of the Moola Brindavana there, under bizarre circumstances and besides, experiences another miracle in his life. Let us now move on to those mysterious happenings.



**GURURAJA, WHO FULFILLS DESIRES**

On 1-1-1987, there was a heavy rush of pilgrims at Mantralaya. G.Narasimhan was one among the devotees, waiting for Brindavana darshan. It was after a long wait that he had excellent darshan of the Brindavana. He later returned to his home in West Tambarm (Chennai), with contentment at heart.

Sri Narasimhan was to be operated upon for cataract in his eye. It was to be in Jan '88 and as the pre-operation checks did not reveal any abnormality, the surgery was performed in the first week itself.

However, in the midst of the operation, Sri Narasimhan regained consciousness and the pain that he felt then, caused an abnormal fear in his mind, resulting in increased heartbeats and certain other side-effects like fever and shivering of the body.

Notwithstanding those ordeals, Sri Narasimhan's sight in that eye was restored after a period of six weeks, when he started wearing glasses. But the joy was short-lived, as his left eye too started developing cataract, affecting his vision in that eye.

In 1989, his family members decided to get him operated again, for restoration of sight in the affected eye. But Sri Narasimhan was not willing for that, as the sufferings he had undergone during the earlier treatment, were still green in his memory. He even started doubting whether he would survive the operation. So he decided against surgical treatment, despite pressures brought on him by his family members.

'Is it not sufficient to lead the rest of my life with vision in just one eye....I have, however, one more desire in my life, Gururaja....and that is to have your darshan again to my heart's content. But how can I have it fulfilled in this state? I have vision only in one eye and there is functional disability in my right leg too, hindering my movement itself. Even to get down from a small elevation, I have to take support and apart from being physically handicapped thus, I am in dire straits financially too. In the midst of these adversities, another visit to Mantralaya to have your darshan, seems to be a distant mirage,' vented Sri Narasimhan in his prayer to Sri Raghavendraswami, from the innermost recesses of his heart.

It is but natural to expect Sri Gururaja to grace the fulfilment of a true devotee's yearning and we have seen this happening in several episodes, cited earlier. And in the case of Sri Narasimhan also, the saint of Mantralaya carries it out - yes, in a manner surpassing the expectations of the devotee!

Even as Sri Narasimhan was pondering everyday as to how he could visit Mantralaya again, he has a dream one night, in which he is directed by an unknown person to indulge himself in doing puja to his deity. Accordingly, he starts doing such worship of Sri Raghavendraswami, with utmost bhakti and involvement.

A few days later, a person of the same age as Sri Narasimhan, came to meet him. The visitor, strangely, came there with a request that Narasimhan should accompany him to Mantralaya, as there was nobody to keep company with him and the experience of



Narasimhan's earlier visit would be helpful to him. He also told Narasimhan that he had a Railway pass for two persons and that he would bear all the additional expenses for the trip. Sri Narasimhan was left agape, or hearing this and could not believe his own ears!

He was even more joyous when he learnt that the person was known by the name Gurunathan, revelling in the delight that his worship of Gururaja had brought to him a person of the same name.

On 12-12-1989, both the devotees left for Mantralaya at night by the Bombay Mail, in the luxury and comfort of an air-conditioned coach. It was a very pleasant journey for both, as they could enjoy the company of each other.

By noon, the following day, they reached Mantralaya and after taking bath in the holy waters of the Tungabhadra, they had darshan of Sri Rayaru. Then, on the three following days, they performed seva to Sri Raghavendraswami and left the place for Chennai on the 17th December, reaching their homes in the morning, the following day.

Long after reaching home, Sri Narasimhan was always reflecting upon Mantralaya and wondering about the excellent darshan he had there, running in his mind's eye the recollections of the holy bath in the Tungabhadra river, the darshan of Sri Gururaja and above all the puja of Sri Moola Rama and the Rathotsava in the evenings.

'Gururaja, even at this old age, I have, by your grace, been spared of my vision in at least one eye and that is enough for me. I don't feel the need for operation in the

other eye and my physical condition may not also permit surgery now,' was the thought that used to be occupying his mind every minute during his prayer before the Brindavana of Sri Rayaru and the memories of those moments were constantly looming before him.

In the state of happiness that his mind was passing through, his wife suddenly dropped on him a bolt from the blue, in informing him about the date that had been fixed for his operation - a thing that he was not wanting and in fact was praying for avoidance.

There was to be an eye-camp in the end of December and early January to render free treatment to deserving patients and the lady had registered her husband's name for cataract surgery, on a date convenient to them.

Sri Narasimhan felt unhappy that his wife should have done such a thing, when he had been away at Mantralaya, but later, on the 28th Dec., he went to the eye-camp, most reluctantly though, accompanied by her.

When he was subjected to pre-operation tests, nothing was found to be normal in him and as a consequence he felt inwardly an apprehension as to what his condition after the surgery could be in such a state of health, particularly when he had suffered a lot during the earlier operation, even when everything was perfect with him then. Sri Narasimhan, therefore, tried his best to avoid being taken to the eye-camp again, but his family members were adamant that he should have the treatment. So, with the B.P. report he went to the place on

that the doctors should send him back for some reason or the other.

But, on the contrary, he was admitted for the operation that was to take place on the following day. Sri Narasimhan did not know what he should do and put up a blank face.

‘Gururaja, when it dawns next, it would be 1st Jan 1990. It was on the same day three years ago that I first had your darshan. After three years, the operation is now to take place on the same day. And after everything has happened, I have no sorrows now. You have fulfilled my desire to have another darshan of yours and that too in a manner that was beyond my expectations. It matters little whether I live or die now, since I am already of an age that beckons death. My only craving is that I should die a peaceful death. I shall not think that this operation is being performed on me. I shall ever be chanting your stotra and thinking of you. And anything taking place can only be attributed to your action. Therefore, I am in no way connected with this operation.

Whatever are the resultant effects of it, I am not going to bear them and it will be you, who should be enduring them for me. And the very operation is going to be not on me, but on you,’ were the thoughts rambling in the mind of Sri Narasimhan, when he dozed off to sleep.

On the morrow, he was called at 11 A.M.

One of the doctors gave him an injection in the region of the eye. Another one did likewise near the ear, on his jaw, while a third one came and asked of the others, ‘How are you going to perform the operation in this state? Will it be alright’

Sri Narasimhan thought at that time that it would be nice if they sent him home even in that condition, but later felt solace in the thought that the operation was after all to be not on him, but on Sri Raghavendra.

Subsequently, the operation was successful, but the patient was totally unaware as to how it took place and on whom it was performed. He did not at all have any sensation of it and was left with the impression that it had been performed on someone else. In short, although the surgery was on him, he could not actually feel it.

'Appa, Gururaja, how mysterious are your deeds!' mentioned Sri Narasimhan in wonderment and concluded his letter to me with the observation, 'This should be known to others also. Everyone should realize the supernatural powers of Sri Raghavendra and propagate to others that Sri Gururaja will never let down those who approach him with utmost faith in him. And whatever you have written about Sri Raghavendra is true to the core. In fact, I have experienced it in my own life and have penned it to you.'

This incident is a pointer to the truth that if we submit ourselves to Sri Raghavendra with the belief that he is our sole saviour, all our miseries would vanish in no time, without our ever being aware of how they have ceased to exist.

In the next chapter, we will come across a strange incident involving a +2 class student. His family was not knowing anything about Sri Raghavendra and in that scenario, the event takes place!

## **SRI RAGHAVENDRA GRACES WHAT IS LONGED FOR**

In 1988, a “plus two” student from Salem, by name R. Muralikrishnan, had written a letter to me.

He had expressed in it that he had read my books on Sri Raghavendra and had enjoyed their contents conveyed in simple style. He had also mentioned that all his family members had turned devotees of Sri Raghavendraswami and that it was the mysterious power of the divine personality that had drawn them towards him. Their experience of the saint’s influence, follows in this narrative.

It was the time when an exhibition was being held in Salem. Muralikrishnan had gone to that fair and was fascinated by a small marble idol of Sri Raghavendra that was among the various objects displayed for sale.

On his return home, he requested his mother to buy it for him. But his mother was not willing for that, as she was then bemoaning the death of her daughter’s child (a son), that had been born with some health problems and a surgical treatment of the disorder had proved of no avail. She was even disdainful of God, as a result of the tragedy. Her son’s craving, however, was inopportune then, as she was not even knowing about Sri Raghavendra or his supernatural powers, at that point of time.

She told her son bluntly, ‘Look Murali, we do not know anything about Raghavendra and therefore, there is no point in having his idol with us.’

Muralikrishnan was unhappy about what his mother had said. But he prayed to Sri Raghavendra wholeheartedly and with relentless faith.

His mother, on the other hand, was feeling troubled by her son's obduracy, that too at a time when she was in grief, over the loss of her grandson. Hence, she left for her mother's house, for a change of atmosphere.

Muralikrishnan's grandmother was distressed by her daughter's agony, when she arrived there. She, therefore, showed her a picture of a saint and advised her to pray to him for solace, incidentally making her understand that nothing could be gained by brooding over the bereavement.

The daughter, on seeing the picture, was astonished, but felt disinterested because it was of the same holy person, whose idol her son was pestering her to buy for him. So, she told her mother categorically that she would not be inclined to worship him.

But the old lady, responding emphatically, said, 'Don't tell like that please. I asked you to worship Sri Raghavendra only to get mental tranquillity, in your disturbed state. You must try that and surely you will then have the peace of mind that is eluding you,' whereupon Muralikrishnan's mother folded her hands in mock reverence.

The same night, Muralikrishnan's mother had a dream in which she is grieving over the death of her grandchild that was lying on her lap. Her mother too was beside her then and the place where they were bewailing

and Chakra sparkling there. And Sri Raghavendraswami, with all his radiance, holding a staf and a kamandala in his hands, emerges there and gestures to both Muralikrishnan's mother and grandmother, to sit there. Soon he also sits there and taking the child on his lap, winds a silken cloth around its head.

And the next morning, the lady who was earlier in a fit of uncontrollable agony, experiences great relief from the pain in her heart, peace engulfing her mind. She gets enlightened in the process that her grandchild had, true to the age-old belief, attained the Lotus feet of the Lord, feeling assuaged about it.

Subsequently, when Muralikrishnan who had gone out returns home on the following day, he is surprised to see that his mother had brought for him the same idol that he had longed to possess earlier but had been chided by her for entertaining that craving. And when he finds that his mother, who had not known anything about Sri Raghavendra has changed her outlook and got the saint's idol for him, Muralikrishnan asks her how she has reconciled herself to buying that piece for him. The mother then narrates the happenings to her son and Muralikrishnan is left nonplussed at what he learns from his mother.

Later, Muralikrishnan's sister gives birth to another son and the child is named as Sri Raghavendra Balaji and is now being brought up with great care and affection.

## **SRI RAGHAVENDRA'S MYSTERY IN SRI LANKA**

One, Siva Chidambaram, had written a letter to me in 1988 from Nallur in Jaffna, Sri Lanka.

He had mentioned in it that he was employed as an electrician in a Shipping vessel of London and in 1986 he had come to know about Sri Raghavendra, through some religious publications like the "Gnana Bhumi." He had also mentioned that after seeing the movie "Sri Raghavendrar" in which Sri Rajnikant had donned the role of the saint, his devotion towards Sri Raghavendraswami had intensified.

He got a picture of Sri Raghavendra from India through a friend and after framing it, started worshipping it. He erected a platform at the place of his worship and created a decorative background to depict divine splendour appropriate to the saintly personality and made it a habit to utter the "Raghavendra stotra" every evening, in worship of the Swami.

In 1987, he celebrated the aradhana of Sri Raghavendraswami, with great devotion and involvement. Music concerts were held on the occasion and wide publicity was given for the event, despite his being not so affluent as to bear such expenses. Undoubtedly, it was his allurements towards Sri Raghavendra that had caused him to celebrate the event in a grand style.



On the third day of the aradhana festivities, he retired to bed late in the night, after completion of all activities. In the wee hours of that night Siva Chidambaram has a dream. He sees in it the advent of Sri Raghavendraswami, on the platform that had been erected by him! He gets up suddenly and sees that the lamps lighted to the Lord were still burning, whereupon he feels a contentment at heart. He realizes that Sri Raghavendra was passing on some message to him, but was unable to comprehend what it was.

It was at that time he received telex/cable messages from his Shipping company to rejoin duty. But Siva Chidambaram and his wife deliberated among themselves that he should get back for duty, only after visiting Mantralaya. However, their slender financial resources left them wondering how they could raise the huge sum required for the trip to India.

Soon, they found a way out and raised a sum of Rs.11,000/- by pledging some gold. But they could not make the trip, even after a month.

'It is more than a month now and there is money at hand. We can undertake the journey, I suppose.'

'Yes, we can start on the pilgrimage. But for some mysterious reason, he is not calling us still. I do puja to him daily and he knows when to call us there. Despite our efforts, there has been something or the other hindering our journey.'

One more week passed thus!

It was early morning, one day.

Siva Chidambaram wakes up suddenly, on hearing a voice telling, 'Sri Raghavendra's devotees have all come. Are you still sleeping?'

'Who came here now,' he asks his wife.

'Nobody has come...'

'No, it appeared like Sri Raghavendra calling me to come.'

'Let it happen so,' tells the wife.

The next day, Siva Chidambaram started for Colombo with his wife and youngest son and after getting the visa and tickets there, travelled via Tiruvananthapuram and reached Mantralaya.

The family had only been worshipping a picture of Sri Raghavendra till then and besides, praying to him inwardly, but on seeing the Jeeva Brindavana of the divine personality, all three of them became ecstatic and shed tears of joy in front of it. The sublimity of their joy was an expression of their deep devotion that had brought them to the feet of Sri Raghavendra - what, by even pledging the gold chain of the lady for meeting the expenses of the trip!

They bought a copy of my book "Sri Raghavendra Mahimai" at Mantralaya. And daily they were reading the book in the morning, after their bath. Thus, they spent five days at Mantralaya and left for Sri Lanka, immediately thereafter.

Later, they celebrated in Jaffna the aradhana

In front of their house in Jaffna, there is some vacant space. Siva Chidambaram has installed and sanctified an idol of Sri Krishna there in 1984. According to the letter he has written to me, he has since initiated measures to consecrate a mrithika Brindavana of Sri Raghavendra, as also to raise a suitable mantap thereat.

Apart from this, he also apprises that Sri Raghavendra proffers advice to him in his dreams, with solutions for complicated matters, legal issues, entanglements and the like. And it needs no elucidation here that Siva Chidambaram's unshakeable faith and devotion towards Sri Raghavendraswami are undoubtedly the reasons for his enjoying such grace of the Swami.

True to his desire, Siva Chidambaram joined his marine duties again, only after having darshan of Sri Raghavendra. He was ever thoughtful of Sri Raghavendra and such deep devotion of his had been rewarded with frequent darshans of Sri Raghavendra, in his dreams.

I often receive letters from readers expressing disappointment at their not getting any dreams or Sri Raghavendra not appearing in their dreams, even after three days' sankalpa seva. In my opinion, his appearance in one's dream, is a grace akin to divine mercy. A question may be raised here as to why we do the Sankalpa seva at all, when we are devoted to him everyday and also why we should ever vow to perform it. And surely, it is only an exercise to concentrate upon him and pray to him wholeheartedly, with deep devotion, eschewing all other worldly thoughts and desires from our mind on such occasions.

Some may of course get a dream during the seva or the day after its completion. Yet others may not have any dream at all. But, a devotee can definitely feel the result of the seva, if done with true bhakti and unwavering concentration of mind.

Also, in spite of one's vow to perform sankalpa seva for a specific number of days, Sri Raghavendra himself may prevent its continuation till the completion of the period, should it be his will that it is not necessary to carry it out to its conclusion. Further, the seva need not necessarily be performed at Mantralaya, even if it is the general belief that it is appropriate to fulfil one's vow there. And occurrences that expound these truths, are contained in the next chapter.

We are in the last few chapters of part II of "Sri Raghavendra, the Saint of Mantralaya." With one more episode, this book will reach its end. And for subsequent publications, I look forward to knowing from the readers their own mysterious experiences or those of others known to them, ascribable to the supernatural powers of Sri Raghavendra. Or, if there are any strange happenings relating to the consecration of any Brindavana, known to the readers, a short write-up regarding those could be arranged to be sent to the publisher's address given in this book. All such matters will certainly be helpful for compilation of further volumes on the story of Sri Raghavendra.

With this, we move on to the next chapter.



**MAN PROPOSES, GOD DISPOSES**

Devotees are often seeking from me clarifications on Sankalpa Seva. How a Sankalpa Seva should be performed, has been set out in detail in Part I and yet some doubts are raised about the ritualistic aspects of it. Perhaps, not many have had the opportunity of reading the chapter on it, in Part I.

It is good to get things clarified, rather than entertaining a confused thinking in one's mind. And when devotees write to me, I too ponder over matters and provide them with elucidations from even hitherto unknown perspectives. Further, I draw upon the experience of devotees and vouch for the age-old beliefs and practices that are traditionally followed in divine worship.

What we normally follow as practices illustrative of our devotion, is the daily prayer and worship that we offer to our deity. Sankalpa Seva, on the contrary implies taking a vow to perform seva for a specific period for attainment of a desired objective - the seva generally encompassing pradakshana and namaskara done in worship of the deity/saint.

Seva can be performed at the Moola Brindavana of Sri Raghavendraswami at Mantralaya or at any of the Mrithika Brindavanas of the saint, or even in homes. Those who want to perform seva at the Brindavana of the Swami could get guidance from the authorities/priests there, as slight variations in practices are not unlikely from place to place.

Devotees performing the seva at home should clean the floor thoroughly, be it in the puja room or elsewhere, where the ritual is to be observed. They should first have their bath and then keep a stool or similar thing in the centre of the room. And on it should be kept a picture of Sri Raghavendra vertically, with a support at the back. It should then be decorated with flowers and after prayers to the Swami, a vow should be taken before him that the seva will be performed for a specific number of days. Then, in the mornings and evenings, pradakshana and namaskara should be done 24 times in each session and archana performed with flowers, chanting stotras. Naivedya should be offered and the prasad taken later. Food must be had only once during day time and milk and fruits alone should be taken at night. The sevarthi should not use bed or pillow and should spread a washed and dried dhoti and lie on it. Those attending office can finish the worship and take Tirthaprasad, before leaving for duty. After returning in the evening, they should take bath and continue the seva. But it is desirable that during the period of seva, the devotee remains at home and avoids any possible pollution from outside.

If the seva be for three days, a Brahmin should be fed on the fourth day and if it be not possible, he should at least be given the things necessary for him to cook and have a meal, as divine prasad.

**I**f the seva sankalpa be for 7 days and a break should occur in the middle for any reason whatsoever, there is nothing wrong in continuing it later, from where it was left off. When a seva is taken up with deep devotion,

divine dispensation carrying some significance that may not be apparent to us humans. But it must be borne in mind that we should not break a seva on our own, for any petty reasons.

One K. Jagannatha Iyengar's uncles lived in Bombay. One of them had invited the nephew to Bombay, advising him to get down at Mantralaya en route and to do seva there for 48 days.

K.J.Iyengar, accordingly started his seva at Mantralaya. Poor man, he had a pitiable life in his early days.

He was the son of one Kuppusami Iyengar, who was a police officer in the Cuddapah district, way back in 1910. Kuppusami Iyengar and his wife were childless for some years and on 13-10-1918, they reached Puri and prayed to Lord Jagannatha there, for the gift of an offspring, in answer to which they were graced with the birth of a son, within a year. The child was named as Jagannathan, being the gift of the Lord of Puri.

On 20-2-1920, Kuppusami Iyengar, who had gone out to gather evidence in a murder case, did not return home. About that time, four persons had been sentenced to death in some other case and Kuppusami Iyengar's wife was prevailed upon to depose that those four only had killed her husband.

Being the spouse of an upright police officer, Kuppusami Iyengar's wife did not yield to pressures and avoided distortion of truth. Soon, she left Cuddapah with the young child, Jagannathan, to her mother's house in Srirangam.

She was the beneficiary of a measly sum of Rs. 20/- p.m. as pension, from the government. Even in such dire circumstances, she educated her son Jagannathan upto S.S.L.C., which he completed in 1936. And when Jagannathan attained 18 years of age, the pension eligibility of his mother was terminated and he was offered a job in the police department. But the mother, who had, under unfortunate circumstances, lost her husband in harness, was not inclined to send her son for the police service.

So, Jagannathan left for Bombay to seek greener pastures and on the way, he detrained at Mantralaya to do seva there.

He took the sankalpa to perform seva for 48 days, but on the 23rd day he had darshan of Sri Raghavendra, in his dream.

Oh, what a pleasant experience it was! Sri Raghavendra gave him mantrakshata in the dream, blessing him to go to Bombay and also enlightening him that he will meet with success in his endeavours.

On the morrow, Jagannathan met the Chief priest at the Brindavana and told him of the dream that he had, enquiring of him how he could leave the seva and depart from the place, when he still had another 25 days left for completion of it. He was actually on the horns of a dilemma, torn between the desire to leave for Bombay (in deference to what Sri Raghavendra had revealed to him in his dream) and the uncertainty haunting him about the propriety of leaving the seva incomplete.



The archaka told Jagannathan, 'When Sri Raghavendra himself has given you the permission, you don't have to continue the seva. You may start for Bombay and Sri Gururaja has done this, only to grace you.' He then gave him prasad and fruits and bade him goodbye, with his blessings. Jagannathan too, after worshipping the Brindavana, left for Bombay.

Soon, in the shorthand test, Jagannathan stood first in the presidency. Later, in his 36th year, he had climbed up the ladder to occupy a good position and in 1938 he got several offers of good jobs and thereafter from the Service Commission too (in 1940). He was the P.A. to a minister in 1943 and for two years (before his retirement in 1976), he was P.A. to the Chief Minister.

For Jagannatha Iyengar, his visit to Mantralaya brought him success and development in his career. His phenomenal rise after the Mantralaya darshan was in stark contrast to the sufferings he had undergone in the earlier part of his life.

K.J.Iyengar, when he had come to Chennai two years ago, wanted to see me and when we met each other, he told me several incidents, with a sense of great emotion.

Recently, when he had gone to Mantralaya and was waiting to seek the blessings of Sri Sushmindra Thirtha, the pontiff had asked his staff to bring a silk shawl to honour Jagannathan. But, as the key of the steel almirah was not readily available then, Sri Sushmindra, in an instant, took the shawl on his person and honoured Jagannathan by presenting it to him and blessing him in

the process. And when the key was found and the almirah opened, the pontiff honoured him again by presenting yet another silk shawl to him. These happenings were narrated to me by Sri K.J. Iyengar, with great ecstasy and tears of joy in his eyes.

The reason why I have dwelt at length upon the incident pertaining to K.J. Iyengar, is to emphasize the truth that although the sankalpa or vow be for performance of seva for a specific number of days, Sri Raghavendra will extend his grace even in the middle of the seva (before its completion).

And should the seva be hindered, one need not bother about it. So also one must not feel disappointed that there has been no dream or that the darshan of Sri Gururaja could not be had in one's dream, as such thoughts will only distract the mind that should be solely concentrating upon Sri Raghavendra. We must always make our supplication to Sri Rayaru and place our problems before him with the confidence that he will take upon himself the responsibility for solving them. Sri Raghavendra, in such an event, will grace us with favourable results, even without our expecting it to materialize so soon.

A reader of my book had written to me that he was in penurious circumstances and cannot afford to go to Mantralaya for seva, asking of me whether seva at the Moola Brindavana at Mantralaya was supposed to be more result-oriented than the one to be performed at a Mrithika Brindavana or at home.

I have already touched upon this aspect and emphasized that Sri Raghavendra could be worshipped

from wherever one is. And in support of this, I shall cite here an episode narrated to me by the Late Gopal Rao of Sri Raghavendraswami Brindavan, Mantralaya, whom I met at Chennai, when I was writing Part II of Sri Raghavendra Mahimai. In fact it was he who requested me to include the incident in Part II, for the knowledge of devotees.

A husband and wife, working in Anantapur University, were great devotees of Sri Raghavendra, visiting the Sri Mutt at Anantapur regularly. They had an eight month old daughter whom they loved so much that they would writhe in agony, if the child fell sick or suffered any pain.

Once, the child became seriously ill and medical assistance was of no avail. So the parents wanted to worship Sri Raghavendra and do seva at the Anantapur Sri Mutt for the well-being of the child, but on second thoughts decided to go to Mantralaya itself, in the belief that performance of seva at that holy place only could cause fulfilment of their prayer to the divine personality.

They, therefore, left for Mantralaya with the sick child and started the seva, on arrival at the holy place.

On the very next day, Sri Raghavendra appeared in their dream and enlightened to them, 'Why have you brought the sick child to Mantralaya? You could have performed the seva at Anantapur itself. Let it not be thought that I would grace devotees only if worshipped at Mantralaya. You could do the seva even at your place and that is sufficient to earn my grace.....'

Soon, the child became alright in health and the couple returned to Anantapur.

Sri Raghavendra's infinite mercy and compassion is laid bare in this incident also. But it must not be construed that he does not want devotees to visit Mantralaya. His contention, as is clear in the purport of the dream, is that it should not be thought that his grace can be earned only in Mantralaya.

Those who can afford to visit Mantralaya should go there and stay there for a few days, for mental peace.

Let it not be thought, however, that beneficial results can be achieved only if one visits Mantralaya. K.J. Iyengar got down at Mantralaya and performed his seva, only because it was on his way to Bombay. His worship of Sri Raghavendra there, caused his elevation and all the good things that followed in his life, at every step. Those who came to Mantralaya from Anantapur, under the mistaken notion that they can have the grace of the Swami, only if they visited Mantralaya, were enlightened appropriately by Sri Gururaja, in their dreams.

There is no substitute to true devotion emanating from the depth of one's heart. Whatever task we take up, the uttering of Sri Raghavendra nama and worship of him from our innermost recesses, will confer benefits on us and favourable results will accrue from such faith and bhakti.

The success story of one P.S. Raghavendran, who, by his lone efforts, raised and consecrated a temple for Sri Satyanarayana at Kannadapalayam (Tambaram), will bear testimony to this truth and his experiences

**ONE FOR THE OTHER!**

One P.V.Srinivasa Rao and his wife were living as an ideal family in Dharmapuri, with their son aged 14.

In the past, parents blessed with one child would crave for another offspring, to grow up with the first-born. It may be recalled that Thimmanna Bhatta and Gopikamba, not content with a daughter and a son, had prayed to Lord Venkatesa for another son and as a result Venkatanatha was born (who later became famed as Sri Raghavendra).

Likewise, Sri Srinivasa Rao and his wife too were praying for another son, but their prayers remained unanswered for long. So, they decided to go to Mantralaya and perform seva there, as they had immense faith in Sri Raghavendra and were his ardent devotees.

In 1924-25, the Raos started Sankalpa Seva at Mantralaya, with great devotion. It was continued for about three months and on its completion they returned to Dharmapuri. In answer to their prayers, they were blessed with the birth of a son, within a year of completion of the seva.

The child was named as Raghavendran, since it had been born with the blessings of Sri Raghavendraswami. It was brought up in the ideal way, the parents instilling discipline and bhakti in its mind, right from the formative years.

Raghavendran completed his education, got employed and later married at the appropriate age. Ere long, he had children too and after serving many years, retired from his service. But strangely, he had not had the opportunity of visiting Mantralaya, even once, during that entire period. His inner conscience would always be reflecting that his very birth and his advancement in life were solely due to the grace of Sri Raghavendra. As such, he would often regret that in spite of his deep devotion towards Sri Gururaja, he had not at all been able to go to Mantralaya. But, Sri Raghavendra, as is known well, engineers everything with some purpose. And true to that, there was something to be still accomplished by Raghavendran, that was holding in restraint his pilgrimage to Mantralaya.

One V.Srinivasan, an astrologer friend of Sri Raghavendran saw his horoscope and told him that he was destined to construct and consecrate a temple for Sri Narayana, during his life time. Although Raghavendran was sceptic about it in the beginning, the seed that had been sown in his mind by the prophecy, made him vow that if it was satya (the truth), he would build a temple for Lord Satyanarayana, with the blessings of Sri Raghavendraswami, whom he had been adoring from his heart of hearts.

In accordance with the vow, on 18-1-90, the foundation was laid in the sastraic way for construction of a temple for Sri Satyanarayana. The astrologer further predicted that in 36 months the temple would be completed and its kumbhabhishekam performed and this spurred Raghavendran to get himself fully involved in the task. from then onwards.

Raghavendran's wife and son also joined him in the effort, with great interest and bhakti. The place where the temple was to come up was his own land and so his entire family worked for the success of the project, without expecting anything in return.

Sri Raghavendran's son, Murali Manoharan, went to several places and held religious discourses, to collect funds for the temple. He was an orthodox person and had seldom tasted anything in a hotel. As he was engaging himself in devotional service, with total commitment, many volunteered to help him for the worthy cause undertaken by him.

As is always the case, there were also a few who spoke discouragingly and Raghavendran's cousin was one among them. He expressed openly that when their family was not even doing puja to Sri Satyanarayana, why a temple was being built for that deity.

The kumbhabhishekam for Sri Lakshmi Satyanarayana temple was then fixed to take place on 11-10-92. As a large sum was required for the purpose, Raghavendran and his family members were left perplexed, not knowing what to do. For, how many places they will have to visit for the purpose!

'Appa, Guru Raghavendra! There is only one more month left. It is not known how I can complete the kumbhabhishekam. Therefore, I leave that responsibility to you. Although I am 67 years of age, I have not been so far blessed to visit Mantralaya, even once. Please grace the successful completion of the kumbhabhishekam on the auspicious day fixed for it. It is my earnest desire to visit your holy place and have your darshan after the

kumbhabhishekam and I vow before you to accomplish it,' reflected Raghavendran within himself, with a resoluteness in his mind.

Raghavendran, from that moment, was ever prayful to Sri Gururaja and was chanting his name incessantly. And with the blessings of Sri Rayaru, the installation and purificatory ceremony did take place with all grandeur, on the auspicious day fixed for the purpose. Indeed, Raghavendran could not believe how the required funds had been raised and the expenses managed within such a short time.

Along with Sri Satyanarayana and His consort Sri Lakshmi, Sri Anjaneya, Sri Ganapathi, Sri Durga, the Navagrahas and Naga were also installed and sanctified, followed by a Mandalabhisheka. After completion of all these, on the Ugadhi day in March 1993, Raghavendran left for Mantralaya and after performing seva there for a week, returned to his place with contentment at heart.

Even today, pujas are performed in this shrine in an impressive manner. From Tambaram bus stop, one should take either 18H or 55B route bus and alight at Kannadapalayam stop, to go to this temple.

Sri P.C. Raghavendran meets me now and then. 'It looks as if Sri Raghavendra had willed it that I should have his darshan at Mantralaya, only after completion of this holy task and so had made me wait for 67 long years for it to happen,' he tells often, with tears of ecstasy blinding his eyes. He also narrates to me the mysterious happenings taking place there, leaving me baffled at the actions of the Lord Supreme.



In every mysterious deed of Sri Raghavendra, there will be some hidden significance. At times, when the completion of the task on hand gets delayed, the mental anguish arising therefrom, will be indescribable. But in the end, when the graceful eyes of Sri Gururaja are turned towards us, all the sufferings that we were subjected to earlier, dissipate from our mind.

Sri Raghavendran's visit to Mantralaya after the accomplishment of the holy task would certainly have been quite a different experience from what he would have felt, if he had gone there earlier. He would have undoubtedly rejoiced at heart, 'Oh, Gururaja! Is it for this you have enacted such a drama!'

The way Sri Gururaja extends his grace, is truly marvellous - particularly when it is not for the purpose longed for, but for a different one that is even more gladdening in the end. And as he delays his mercy, it only intensifies our perseverance and resolve, leading us to that level of devotion where we start praying that we look to him only as the saviour.

If, in the perception of the readers, this book has come out well, it may not be apparent to them how much I have vented my agonies before Sri Gururaja and for how long I have prayed to him from the depths of my heart, for removal of the obstacles in the way and the successful completion of the work. I shall dwell upon this in a detailed manner in Part III and present only a bird's eye view here.

In 1981, I wanted to write and release only short works on Sri Raghavendra. But, in the following year, I started writing a brief life story of the saint. Every incident

in his life that I took up for penning at that time, set me thinking that I should write in a detailed manner. Still, in 1983, I had written in a concise manner the life story of Sri Raghavendra in a chronological sequence, covering all aspects of his life, with even information on the seva procedures and in addition, incorporating some stotras too. It was titled as, "Sri Raghavendirarin Arputha Mahimaigal."

In that work, I had mentioned that I had taken on hand the task of writing a book on Sri Raghavendra in a full-fledged manner, somewhat like a research work. In response to it, I received encouraging letters from readers, as also many a request in person, for early publication of such exhaustive account on the saint.

My research on the subject continued till June 1985 and later, with whatever notings I had made during my visit to places, I completed the book, "Sri Raghavendra Mahimai" and had it published in December that year. While I was hesitant about the patronage of readers for such a voluminous work, its popularity actually soared to heights that I had not even dreamt of!

Closely following "Sri Raghavendra Mahimai," I wanted to bring out a book titled, "Raghavendra Brindavana Darisanam" and had requested readers to furnish me information known to them on the various Brindavanas of Sri Raghavendraswami. At the same time, I was also gathering facts from the various places I visited, where mrithika Brindavanas of the saint were existing. Before long, the response from readers was quite encouraging, as lot of material could be gathered from them.

But when I was about to publish the matter, there were certain complexities about it, in that I came to know during my visit to Mantralaya that although the mrithika Brindavanas all over the country have been consecrated with the mrithika obtained from the Moola Brindavana at Mantralaya, not all of them would have got it directly from Mantralaya. For, even as there are Brindavanas that have obtained the mrithika directly from the Sri Mutt at Mantralaya, there are others that have been consecrated by the heads of other Sri Mutts with the mrithika made available to them from Mantralaya. And strangely, the very existence of certain mrithika Brindavanas were not on record with the Sri Mutt at Mantralaya.

I would reiterate here that there is no doubt at all that the mrithika Brindavanas all over the country have been consecrated with the mrithika of the Moola Brindavana at Mantralaya, but the information gap regarding some of them is only about who had consecrated them and from whom the mrithika of the Moola Brindavana had been obtained.

Despite this handicap, I even thought of giving information about the existence of Brindavanas at different places. But in the meanwhile, it occurred to me why I should not be writing about the mysterious deeds Sri Raghavendra has been performing after his Brindavana pravesha.

In the second edition of my publication, I conveyed my request for authentic information about events known to the readers, ascribable to the supernatural powers of the saint, and in response to it, many of them

provided me with details about their own experiences, as well as those of others in their knowledge. And I spent about 6 1/2 years in research work, for gathering the information required for Part II of "Raghavendra Mahimai."

For every episode in this book, I have debated about it for months together. Even if there were to be different versions on the same event, I took note of all of them and utilized only the one that stood the test of authenticity.

While so, there were some problems about my business premises. Wanting to have my own place, even if small, I paid advance in 1991 for a property that conformed to my modest requirements. It was under litigation then, but my lawyer opined that all the legal complexities could be got resolved and on that assurance only the advance money for it was paid.

The owner of the property was having a big family consisting of 4 sons, 5 daughters and a large number of grandchildren.

Within two months of entering into an agreement with him, I paid the balance amount due on the borrowings of the owner for which the property had been mortgaged, and obtained through Court the title deeds there of, after disposal of the pending litigations on the property.

But unfortunately, the owner of the property died suddenly within another two months and registration of the property in my name, therefore, appeared to be more complicated, after his demise. And indeed, it was an irony of fate that I had to later wage a legal battle for the

same property in respect of which I had myself cleared the dues and brought to a finality the pending litigations thereon!

By April 1991, two years had elapsed after my advancing for the house and yet there was no possibility of getting it registered in my name. As I had used up all my cash and jewellery for making payments on behalf of the owner (to get back possession of the house), I had absolutely no money or gold to pay for registration expenses, those who had promised to help me also having wriggled out of their commitment, on knowing about the legal complications attached to the property.

It was almost at that time I thought of writing this book, chapter by chapter, since all the material for publication had been gathered by then. But one day, as guided by my inner conscience, I took a sankalpa before Sri Gururaja that I would commence writing the book only in my own house and till then, be engaged in gathering facts and subjecting them to further research.

Finally, the house was registered in my name in July 1993 and when I thought of commencing the work of writing the book, I found to my dismay that all the materials I had gathered for years and the notings I had made about them were missing and not available in the almirah in which I had kept them locked.

By about this time, I shifted my office to just a two room space in the building that I had purchased and till early 1994 I was involved in gathering more information for the above. Then, suddenly in the middle of 1994, all the materials lost were found, enabling me to commence

my writing. And within six months from then, the book was completed.

After executing the agreement for purchase of the house, I encountered lot of problems and complex situations that left me in dire straits and ultimately when I got over them all, it was more than two years, when the property was finally registered in my name. And it was only after the registration of the property that I realized the truth that it was for my ultimate good that Sri Gururaja has caused several unforeseen things to happen.

All those experiences will be covered in a detailed manner in Part III. Because, even now, when I am to renovate the old building, demolishing certain portions, there are some impediments in my way and it occurs to me that the obstacles could only be leading me to something good and have been so orchestrated by Sri Raghavendra. These happenings will be elaborated upon, in the next volume.

The reason for my writing these is to highlight that Sri Raghavendra, for the good of the devotee, often masterminds situations and causes something different to happen, and quite mysteriously too. Although Sri P.S. Raghavendran was blessed to visit Mantralaya only after 67 years, one should think of all that had been worked out by Sri Gururaja for being accomplished by Raghavendran, in those long years.

I would hasten to add here that taking this as an example, one should not jump to the conclusion that Sri Rayaru is slow in gracing his devotees. On the other hand, we have ourselves seen in several incidents, how

quickly he has acted and disclosed his mysterious powers, appropriate to the occasion.

Raja Sri Gururajachar being rescued from the narrow confines of an almirah, helping Sri Raghavendra Rao to travel at night from Haveri to Hosaritti, offering food to a devotee when in need, and cash being made available to a poor couple, are some of the events already covered, that bear testimony to the fact that Sri Raghavendra instantaneously responds to the call of devotees and extends his helping hand to them, in situations warranting his immediate intervention.

I am desirous that Part II should also be of the same volume as the earlier one, and therefore I am concluding this work with the next chapter. There are of course many more incidents to be penned. In fact, it would be of help, if you too could write to me of any mysterious events experienced in your life or concerning the happenings at the Brindavana at your place. In this book, we have seen how, through the mysterious influence of Sri Raghavendra, Brindavanas came to be established at places like Brindaranyam, Athni and Sirigolla. Similar occurrences known to you could be shared with me, so that they could be covered in the writing to follow this, in which also the mysterious happenings at some of the Brindavanas will be dealt with.

It should not be thought that Sri Raghavendra will come in person to carry out every action. He will even cause things to be done through someone else and at the proper time, leaving us baffled at his mysterious powers.

In the incident relating to the second visit to Mantralaya by Sri Narasimhan (of Tambaram), we have seen how Sri Raghavendra had graced its materialization through a third party who came at the right time and lent a helping hand to him. Likewise, in answer to my mother's prayers Sri Raghavendra had sent another person to fulfil her heart's desire and the interesting episode finds place in the next chapter.

### **GURU RAGHAVENDRA'S BOUNTIFUL GRACE**

‘By adoration of the lotus feet of Sri Hari, he has attained everything worthy; a divine tree fulfilling the aspirations of devotees, let Sri Raghavendra become also the one gracing me with all that I yearn for.’

-Srimad Raghavendra Stotram (4)

As glorified by Sri Appanacharya, the beloved disciple of the saint of Mantralaya, Sri Raghavendra has all along been bestowing on us, the benefits prayed for.

The absence of Sri Appannacharya in Mantrayala at the time of the Brindavana pravesh of Sri Raghavendra, was a situation contrived by the saint himself.

\* Sri Appannacharya rushing from Bichchale, his prayer to Tunga and the river then parting and making way for him, as also his spontaneous composition of the stotra on Sri Raghavendra (beginning as “Sri Poornabodha...” and rendered while hurrying his way towards Mantralaya) - could all these have taken place if Sri Appannacharya had remained in Mantralaya then?



Is there any devotee of Sri Raghavendra who has not chanted the stotra, 'Poojyaya Raghavendraya.....'? Has not Sri Gururaja conferred on Sri Appannacharya the honour of his stotra being rendered everywhere by the devotees of the saint? If Sri Appannacharya had been in Mantralaya during the Brindavana Pravesh of the Guru, could he have had this honour of universal recognition? His slokas that have attained immortality are ever shining in the religious world, and could this wonder have taken place, if the disciple had been present at Mantralaya when his spiritual guide entered the Brindavana?

Nevertheless, Appannacharya felt no elation whatsoever at either the Tungabhadra making way for him or the slokas on his preceptor flowing spontaneously from out of his heart. On the contrary, he wails with a grieving heart that he could not have darshan of his Guru, despite running fast to reach Mantralaya in time. Sri Raghavendra's ringing voice uttering the words, "Saakshi Haya Syothrahi" from the Brindavana, though comforting and heartening to Appannacharya at that moment, could in no way redress the deep anguish that he felt at not having been able to see Gururaja for the last time.

But Sri Raghavendra's mercy does not end with this birth of ours. In Gita, the Lord tells Arjuna, 'Partha! Don't think that this is the only birth for us. We have countless births. You may not know them, but I have knowledge of them all.' True to it, Sri Gururaja, enjoying the supreme grace of the Lord, is also aware of our past, present and future.

We have already seen how a poor man does seva for twelve years to become a king, but is bade by Sri Raghavendra to continue it for a further period of twelve years and is ultimately graced in the next birth to become a Maharaja and get enlightenment about his past, when holding the reins of power.

In a similar incident, we have come across the occurrence in which Appannacharya, born in the next birth as Benagappa, is given darshan by Sri Gururaja every week, to efface the disappointment that he had been subjected to in the earlier birth.

Therefore, there should not be an iota of doubt about Sri Raghavendra turning his graceful eyes towards us - immediately or later - depending upon what we pray for and its relative merits.

In Part I, in the chapter under the caption. "Sri Raghavendra's Mahima in my life" I have written about the grace that Sri Gururaja has extended to me. I have mentioned there that all the agonies that I faced in my life, such as the serious accident to my brother Narahari Krishnan (which he survived only by God's grace), were instrumental in my taking up this worthy cause of propagating divine glory through writings and publication of religious works. I have later said in the same chapter about my visit to Mantralaya and the mysterious happening that I encountered there of my having bought an ochre robe for an old man (undoubtedly it was Sri Raghavendra, who had appeared in that guise).

A year after that visit, I planned to go to Mantralaya again, with my brother and my mother. My friend, Rama

Raghavendran, also expressed his desire to join us for the holy trip.

As I was in a small job then and my friend too was working in the Pallavan Transport Corporation, it was not possible for us to avail of long leave and so we programmed our trip in such a way that some holidays were combined with our weekly off. And as planned, we left one night for Mantralaya by the Bombay Mail. We were in Mantralaya in the forenoon of the following day and the same evening we got the ticket for Sankalpa seva, along with the coconut to be used for the purpose. Our intention was to complete the seva for three days and after Brindavana darshan in the morning of the fourth day and the customary offering of the hastodaka, to leave Mantralaya and catch the noon train to Tirupati (at Mantralayam Road station).

It was my mother's desire to schedule the programme that way and I had agreed to it.

The next morning, we got up early and after taking bath in the Tungabhadra and wearing silk, we took the sankalpa in the ritualistic way for doing three days' seva and commenced it at once.

Without any hindrance we completed two days' seva and it was only when we finished the second day's seva that it occurred to us that the next day was an Ekadasi day when there will be no abhisheka, archana, alankara or naivedya to Sri Rayaru, on that day.

We had fixed our trip according to the holidays available then and had not seen the religious aspects of the calendar days, in between. And it dawned on us only

in the evening of the second day of the seva that we had committed a great blunder in having failed to notice the religious significance of the Ekadasi day.

Our sole aim, nay the cherished desire at heart, was to visit Mantralaya. In addition, my mother was also entertaining a craving to visit Tirumala during the trip and the programme had been drawn up accordingly, but in our anxiety to cover both the places within the limited time available at our disposal, we had overlooked the fact that there was an Ekadasi day, in between!

At the conclusion of the second day's seva, we decided to continue it on the Ekadasi day and as usual did the pradakshana and namaskara on the third day too. I was not aware then of the religious propriety or otherwise, of performing seva on an Ekadasi day. And I consoled myself that for doing seva to Sri Gururaja, one need not be choosy of the time and day and that it could be performed any day, without distinction.

On the Ekadasi night, we had a discussion in our cottage and planned to leave early next day for Mantralayam Road Station. But my mother had other ideas and said, 'Appa, we have come here somehow and are even leaving the place tomorrow. If you do as I suggest, it would be good. I have sought the advice of the Brindavan authorities also.'

'Please tell, Amma.....'

'We last had the prasad of Sri Rayaru yesterday noon. The whole of today we are fasting. It is not proper to leave the place tomorrow, without taking his prasad....'

'In that case, we would be delayed, Amma.....'

‘Since tomorrow is Dwadasi day, naivedya will be served in the Sri Mutt, by 8.30 A.M., I was told.’

‘If so, there is no problem,’ I said and we all went to sleep then.

On the morrow, we had an early bath and took back the coconut given for the seva (with the blessings of the Guru). And after finishing pradakshana and namaskara, we were waiting for the prasad of Sri Gururaja, immersed in the excellent darshan we had of the Brindavana.

But, as minutes were ticking, there was no sign of Mahamangalarathi being performed.

It was thought earlier that Tirthaprasad would be over by 9 A.M., but on the other hand, even by 10 A.M., we had not gone to the dining hall.

‘Amma, if we start even now, we can catch the train to Tirupati, what do you say?.....’

‘Wait for some more time, please....to go without Tirthaprasad is disquieting to the mind, I say,,,’

‘It is not that, Amma. If we miss the train to Tirupati, we may only have to go by the Bombay Mail in the evening, straight to Chennai.....’

‘Whatever is the desire of Sri Gururaja, let it happen so.....’

At that time there were not many buses from Mantralaya to Tirupati nor even trains, as at present. (Incidentally, we now have even computerised reservation facilities).

At last, after Tirthaprasad, we came out of the dining hall at 11.15 A.M. that day. And by the time we packed our things and reached Mantralayam Road Station (after journey by bus), it was past 2 P.M.

I bought tickets for Chennai, though reluctantly. My mother was of course feeling disappointed that she was missing darshan of the Lord of the Seven hills.

‘Everything has gone off well, but we have not been blessed to have darshan of our family deity, Lord Venkataramana at Tirumala, this time.....’

‘What can be done for that, Amma? If, as planned earlier, we had left for Tirupati in time, we could have reached Tirumala by night. And early in the morning, after doing anga pradakshana or even after having a darshan, we could have reached Chennai by noon and attended office by afternoon.’

By 4.30 P.M., the Madras Mail arrived at Mantralayam Road station and we all boarded the train and took our seats. During the journey, we spoke continuously about the greatness of Sri Raghavendra and his mysterious powers, the conversation, however, ending with the lamentation that we were not blessed to visit Tirupati, en route to Chennai.

‘But for the Ekadasi yesterday, we could have made it to Tirumala.’

‘Why, even if Sri Rayaru had graced us with early Tirthaprasad today, we could have reached Tirumala, in time.’

‘Alright, let us at least be awake, to have a glimpse of Tirumala from the train and fold our hands in reverence to the Lord, as we pass Renigunta in the early hours....’

While we spent our time talking like this, none of us felt weary or drowsy at night.

We were in an unreserved compartment and therefore, there were people getting in or detraining at every station, even at the dead of night.

‘Amma, after 4 or 5 stations, we will reach Renigunta.’

‘Oh, I am happy,’ said my mother with of course a sense of disappointment that we were not getting down there.

Just then, as the train was leaving a station, a well-built man appeared there and sat before us. He was keenly listening to our conversation and after some time he started talking to me.

My mother is an extremely soft hearted person and even at the very sight of our letter to our parents, her eyes will become misty - her mind visualising us, children, living in Chennai. She would also get upset about missing us, whenever we took leave of her from the village or she had to depart from our house in Chennai.

That night also, she could not hide her feeling of disappointment in the train, which was noticed by the person who had just occupied the seat opposite to us.

‘Why, is there anything that has been missed - something that has not materialized?....’ asked the person.

‘Yes, please,’ I said and narrated to him everything that had happened.

‘Even if you had left by noon yesterday, you could not have had darshan on the hills till this morning, after which only you could have left for Chennai’.

‘Yes, it is true please.’

‘Can you not afford to set apart another half a day, for your mother’s sake?’

‘Yes, it could be done, but we have already bought tickets for Chennai.’

‘Oh, it does not matter; when we reach the station, can you alone get down and accompany me?’

‘Oh, surely. By the by, what are you please, if I am not inquisitive?’

‘I am a doctor.’

‘Whereat?’

‘My job is on the hills and my name is Balaji.’

‘Sir, are you working on the hills that is the abode of Balaji?’

‘Yes, that is the place...’

We both were conversing in English and lost count of time, when the train came to a jerking halt. And when I looked out, it was the Renigunta station!

I then told my family members and my friend that I would come in a few minutes and got down from the train, with the person who had become acquainted with me. I followed him, as beckoned by him.



He entered the station master's room and there the Station-in-charge, on seeing him, greeted him and accorded a warm welcome. I was then introduced to him and taking the ticket in my possession, he got an endorsement on it and gave it back to me.

I was not knowing anything about the rules and regulations of the Railways at that time nor of the facilities available to long distance passengers, as this was only my second trip to Mantralaya.

In the circumstances, whatever he discussed with the station-in-charge, was quite astonishing to me. Later, we left in a hurry to our compartment.

My family members and my friend were then signalled by us from the platform to detrain there, with the luggages. My mother was taken aback and could not understand anything.

I shouted, 'Amma, we are going to Tirupati! Please get down.' And with all eagerness, they all got down in a moment.

And from the platform we took the foot overbridge and reached the other side. There, the jutka driver smilingly greeted our guide and saluted him, just what the Station-in-charge had done.

The gentleman who had accompanied us said, 'There is still time for the bus. Therefore, please occupy your seats in this,' showing us a taxi there.

Soon, the taxi was on the move and at lower Tirupati our guide hastened to pay the fare himself.

‘Oh sir, you have helped so much in bringing us here and even the taxi expenses you are now offering to pay for us! Why should you bear that sir?’

‘Please come without raising any objection. Everything can be settled later’, he said and took us to the place where bus tickets are issued for trips to Tirumala. He then continued, ‘The tickets will be issued in a short while. You can go by the first bus itself.’

‘If so, are you not coming to Tirumala, please?’

‘No, I am getting back to Renigunta.’

‘Why sir? If so...’

‘Yes, I came here for you only, more particularly for your mother’s sake.’

We did not know how we should respond to that.

‘You said, you work at Tirumala.’

‘It is not the only place I work at. It is my place of living. Being a doctor, I have to go to many places.’

‘We were thinking that you are also coming to Tirumala.’

‘Well, have good darshan of the Lord and return to Chennai,’ he said as parting words and started walking away from there.

My friend, Rama Raghavendran and I accompanied him to the gate to see him off. We all had some tea near the entrance there. Later, he bade goodbye to us and moved away in quick time. After a few moments, he disappeared from our sight all of a sudden, even as we were watching him going away.

My mother was in tears of joy, when we narrated to her this strange experience of ours.

Afterwards, we bought the bus tickets and travelled to Tirumala, had good darshan of the Lord there and climbed down the hill on foot, due to the heavy rush in vehicular services. We caught an evening train at Renigunta and journeying on the same ticket that we had bought at Mantralayam Road station, reached our destination safely. We were soon in our house, rejoicing at the successful completion of the trip and the unexpected darshan at Tirumala.

‘Amma, Sri Gururaja only has sent a doctor by name Balaji, to fulfil your longing for having darshan of Lord Balaji! Oh, how merciful he is,’ we often expressed among ourselves in great elation, recollecting those thrilling moments.

My friend, Rama Raghavendran too had an astonishing experience in the occurrence that took place there. From the beginning, he was a bit hesitant about making a visit to Tirumala, within the short time available at our disposal, since he had some urgent affairs to be attended to, back home. But when he was told at Renigunta that we were all detraining there, he automatically followed the direction given by me and the doctor and alighted there with the others. It would appear that the doctor had cast such a magical spell on him that without any demur he followed the rest of us, abiding by whatever the doctor friend had asked us to do. And Dr. Balaji's sudden disappearance from our vision, even as we were watching him going, had caused great perplexity to him.

On reaching Tirumala, my friend, more than having darshan of the Lord, was interested in tracing the clinic of our doctor guide. And when it was learnt that there was no such clinic there, answering to the description given by the doctor, a chillness passed through us.

Rama Raghavendran burst out instantaneously, 'Appa, Gururaja, the mysteries you perform are limitless,' and in the spur of that moment composed also a song running on these lines:-

'If one pauses and reverentially utters, "Gururaja", even once, there will be peace pervading the heart.

Oh, what a bliss it would be, if one should be having darshan of his graceful and Divine look.'

Like this, when he is adored with devotion at heart, he will come in any form, to help his devotees. In my life, such happenings are countless. As mentioned in the earlier chapter, I shall write more in Part III about the mysterious way in which I could make up the leeway to possess a house of my own, in the end. Later, in my one hundredth book, I shall be writing solely about my spiritual experiences.

Could I ever have thought that I would be penning so many works! Though I had a flair for writing, even in my younger days, it was Sri Gururaja who brought out the hidden potential in me to the fore and made me shine in the literary field. Whatever I am able to convey to you and to thousands of readers like you through my works, it is only on account of the mercy bestowed on me by Sri

Writing and publishing are my bread winners. It is for the sake of my interest in this line, that I sacrificed other jobs. And this field has ups and downs inherent in it. Nevertheless, Sri Gururaja has been protecting me all along and making me progress, day by day.

To all those who have read this book with devotion, Sri Gururaja will undoubtedly bless them and their families, every happiness and prosperity in their lives.

Apart from your having read this book, it is my desire that you make it available to others also for their perusal, particularly to those who cannot afford to buy a copy. Such noble gesture would be a kind of service to people around you.

I still have details of many authentic episodes with me and would request everyone of the readers to write to me of all the mysterious happenings known to them, ascribable to the supernatural powers of Sri Gururaja, for my incorporating them in the future publications.

There is no doubt at all that if Sri Raghavendraswami is prayed to with unwavering faith and utmost devotion, he will grace us with all that is good for us in this birth, nay even in the future ones. He will extend his mercy and benevolence as a Kamadhenu and a Kalpavruksha, affording protection to us and showering his grace on us, at all times.

I conclude this with my prayers to Sri Raghavendraswami, who has, by his spiritual prowess been performing innumerable miracles - in the process gracing devotees with benign results and giving us all a kind of mental satisfaction and peace, in the bizarre

experiences arising out of his actions that have been beyond the ken of human understanding.

May Sri Raghavendra Guru bless everyone with happiness and prosperity.

“Om Sri Raghavendraya Namaha”

“Sri Krishnarpanamasthu!”



# Kaginela Adikesava



**The Sanctum Sanctorum of Sri Adikesava**